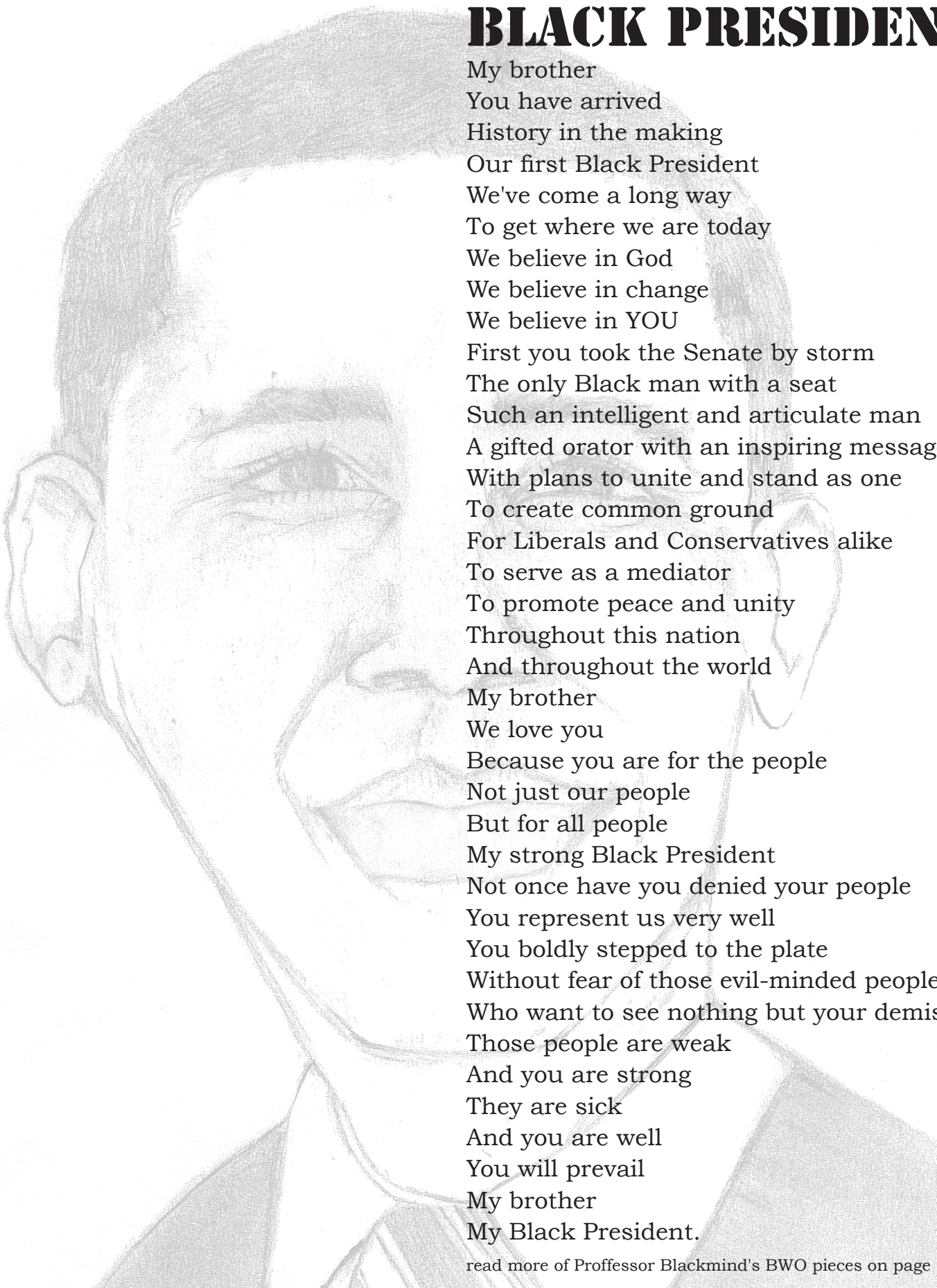


BLACK PRESIDENT



My brother
You have arrived
History in the making
Our first Black President
We've come a long way
To get where we are today
We believe in God
We believe in change
We believe in YOU
First you took the Senate by storm
The only Black man with a seat
Such an intelligent and articulate man
A gifted orator with an inspiring message
With plans to unite and stand as one
To create common ground
For Liberals and Conservatives alike
To serve as a mediator
To promote peace and unity
Throughout this nation
And throughout the world
My brother
We love you
Because you are for the people
Not just our people
But for all people
My strong Black President
Not once have you denied your people
You represent us very well
You boldly stepped to the plate
Without fear of those evil-minded people
Who want to see nothing but your demise
Those people are weak
And you are strong
They are sick
And you are well
You will prevail
My brother
My Black President.

read more of Professor Blackmind's BWO pieces on page 54

As the late great artist Sam Cooke wrote more than 45 years ago, "It's been a long, long time coming, But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will." He wrote this classic song in response to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Forty plus years later, on November 4, 2008 upon accepting the nomination of President of the United States, Barack Obama told supporters that "change has come to America" as he claimed victory in a historic presidential election.

"The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America - I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you - we as a people will get there," Obama said in Chicago, Illinois, before an estimated crowd of up to 240,000 people, with the Sam Cooke theme in mind during his historic campaign.

Today in front of millions and millions of people around the world- many lucky to be in Washington DC - Obama was sworn into office as President of the United States, he stated the following excerpts from his somber yet moving acceptance speech...

"In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted - for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom."

"We cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace. Those values upon which our success depends - hard work and honesty, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism - these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility - a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task. This is the price and the promise of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence - the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny."

"We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

Reading these excerpts, or reading and seeing what we have seen, how do you "bring it home" to you and your life and your mission?

Does President Obama inspire you? Well, he inspires us!

Send Beat editor Omar Turcios your thoughts on how President Barack Obama inspires you, and the top three pieces, voted on by the lead Beat editors, will be given \$50 money orders. The deadline for accepting pieces is February 28, 2009. All the pieces will be featured in The Beat Within publication the first week of March, 2009.

The topics addressed in this incredible issue are, "Yes, we can!" — In just over one month, on January 20th, 2009, this country will have a new leader, a Black man named Barack Obama, who was elected by a majority of Americans of all races. In his campaign to become President, he not only promised change for the country, but expressed a belief that each of us can make changes in our own life. Over and over, he stated, "Yes, we can heal this nation. Yes, we can seize our future. Yes, we can. Yes, we can change. Yes, we can." Do you believe in the promise of change? Do you believe you can make this promise come true in your life? If so, tell us what you hope those changes will be, and how you will accomplish them. If not, tell us why you believe he is wrong.

The second topic, "What matters?" — There are many things that matter to us, from making money to making our families proud. What matters most to you? Is it your freedom? Your family? Your block? Your set? Does making money matter more than making your mom proud? Does respect matter more than your freedom? Tell The Beat the things that matter the most to you, and why they matter. Give us examples, and explain your answer with details.

Last but not least, "One year old, one year wiser" — As we say good-bye to 2008, we wonder whether this year has brought you any new wisdom. Looking back over the year, what do you know now that you did not know when the year began? What one thing (or more than one) has been added to your wisdom bank in the last twelve months? What's new in your knowledge base as you look to 2009 that was not there when you entered 2008? How did you acquire this new knowledge, and how will it affect you as you enter the New Year, and beyond?

Before we wrap this latest heartfelt edition up, on such an historic week. We at The Beat Within are honored to be doing this important work of touching lives, and touching the community by giving you all a voice. Thank you for sharing your lives and thoughts with us.

This morning as Obama was getting sworn in we couldn't help but cry, thinking about the history behind the civil right movement, Dr. King, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks and all the courageous people who helped make this presidency a reality.

Across this great land - the world - people look to Obama for hope. Yet what President Obama needs is all of us to continue to challenge the powers that be. This president needs us all to return to the trenches, or learn how to get there, to make change, to touch lives, to empower the dis-empower, to question authority in a non-violent way. Yes, we celebrate today and all its importance, but starting tomorrow we must get back to work, to challenge our local politicians all the way to our mighty powerful - President Obama. We cannot afford to sit back and relax because Obama is in office. The time is now for us to seize and get busy in making our world a better place. It's not going to be easy, but if there ever was a time to do something, this is it!

This issue goes out to all you writers who wrote on Obama in this incredible 14.03 issue. Until next week...

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Omar Turcios

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Carolyn Goossen, Jill Wolfson, Allan Martinez, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Hanif Bey, Brenda Navarro, Samantha Navarro, Johnny Le, Laura Vitaro, Karla Serrano, Janet Lagto, Allan Tinker, Nic Reiner-Parra, Laura Goode, Molly Patterson, Peggy Simmons, Kirstin Dan, Angel Ryono, Siliva Mortenson, Kolby Hanson, Sam Peterson, Kim Nelson, Gwendolyn Hubner, Oscar Peña Jr., Julia Scheinbeim, and Neela Banerjee.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecewski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczowski, M.A. The detention staff are: Carissa Allen, Antoinette Flores, Mr. B., Tammie Utter, D. Scott Herrmann, Connie Pyburn, Ph. D. Clinical Director, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County Juvenile Detention & Youth Services Center Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Oak Hill - Washington, DC Staff: Alex Moe and Gabriel Prodder

Fresno : Mai Der Vang, Rosie Wentz, Liliana Romero, Nigel Medhurst, Ashleigh Rocker, and Cindy Jensen

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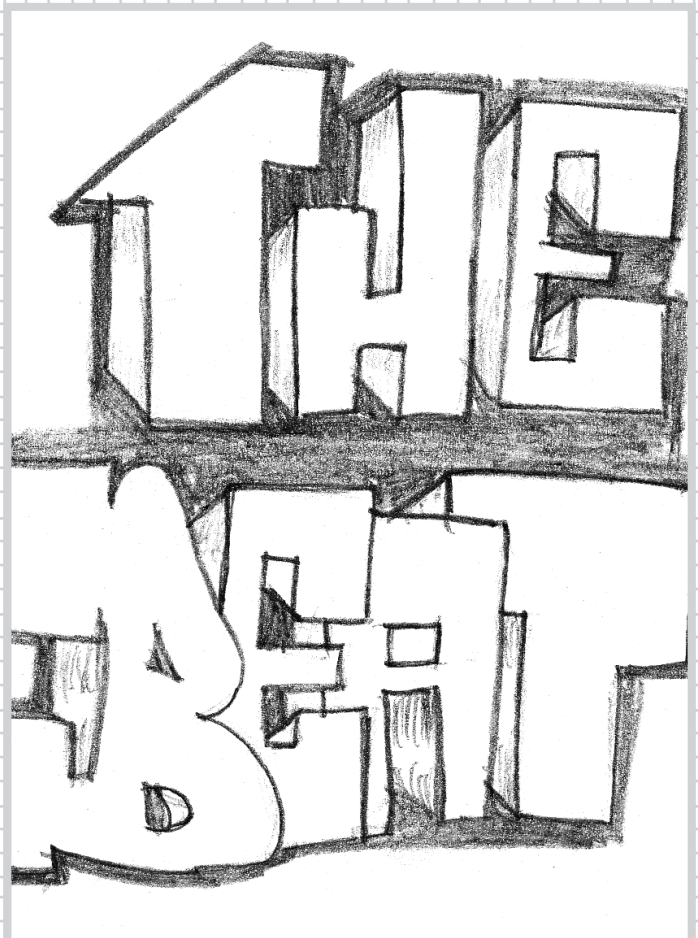
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One Year Older, One Year Wiser

Let me start by saying 2008 has certainly brought me new wisdom. My mind is like, more advanced and I've definitely learned a lot. This year may have been a really bad year in a way. However, it has its ups and downs.

I've been incarcerated, or shall I say locked up, for most of this year. That's a lot of precious time taken from my life. Other than that, it's not the worst problem this year. The people that are closest to me in my life are struggling, stressing and going through financial and health problems. All this seems so bad that it doesn't even look like it's going to improve.

Other than that, there are positive things from this year. I've gained so much knowledge, learned so much, experienced so much. Also I'm very eager to learn new things. So I guess that this year is good in a way. I'm looking forward to a new year 2009.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know you are already out of the hall, and trust that all you have learned in 2008 will keep you free in 2009. We have enjoyed having you in our workshops, not just for what you write each week, but also for your intelligent conversation and thinking. We're sorry those you love are having such a rough time, but now that you're free, you should be able to relieve them of some stress. We know you have the potential for a great future, and that's what we expect. (We're hoping to see you in The Beat office...)

What Matters?

The first thing that matters most to me is my family. Both my parents are still married, which is rare. So I am thankful for that. I also got two brothers and one sister. I wasn't real tight with my sis while growing up, but she is still my sis. Now me and my sis are closer than ever.

I've only seen one of my brothers over the years. My brother's gay, but I still love him because he's my bro. You should never hate someone because of who they are, even though it's yo' family. My older brother I haven't seen in over five years. I'm the youngest of them all.

The second thing that matters most to me is my dream. When I get out, I want to become a wildlife conservationist. Even though I'm locked down, I won't let it stop me from reaching my goals. And I also keep my head up.

-C-Rider, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're proud of you for not allowing your brother's sexual preference to keep you from loving him. You have a lot of things in your corner for making a success of your life (including two married parents). We're really interested in your choice of becoming a wildlife conservationist as a career. How did you come to that choice? What particular animals are you most interested in hoping to work with? Do you have a plan to reach this goal? We think it's a great one, and hope you don't give up on it.

My New Year's Resolution

2009, the new year, I'm not gonna commit crime and not get locked up. I might be at some program if the judge orders me to go, but if I do end up in programs, I'm going to finish it and be home.

Even though this year I messed up, I'm learning from my mistakes. I'm going to turn 18, and I'm gonna be more responsible and good to my family. Also, I'm gonna get my GED and go to city college and hopefully get a good job.

This coming new year's is going to be change for my life. I hope everyone in the system learn from their mistakes and get out soon.

-DK, San Francisco

From The Beat: The goals you've set for yourself are the ones that will move you into freedom and establish a strong foundation for your future. Getting your GED and going to City College will open your eyes to a possibilities that you can't know about until you are exposed to them. Don't disappoint yourself. Keep this promise!

My Mind In Deep Thought

(This is not to be racist. It's just a message of truth).

I have my right hand across my heart like I'm pledging allegiance, and as I speak I'm 100% serious.

Is this shhh really a game? This question keeps poppin' up in my brain, so I give it some serious thought, and my mind goes back to that talk that I had with my step father. "Do you see any other race besides blacks walkin' around trying to imitate that hip-hop image?" Sure, every race has good and bad, but blacks seem to have it more bad. The media sets an image and, of course, people follow what they believe is cool. Like Lil' Wayne walkin' around with \$1,000,000 chains and throwin' drug money in the air, makin' it rain. But all it is, in reality, is entertainment.

But sometimes I think that people set this as a trap, so all of us blacks could end up laid flat on our back. Since "they" can't kill us no more, or keep us enslaved, they turn to the media, so they can put out a false image on life. And of course we all want to live that life, to be able to just make it rain and sleep with all of the models, and have a house on the beach, with white gates. But how do we get it? By robbin? By sellin' dope? (This is the thought that runs through our head.) Yes, that's how we're gonna do it.

Now, everything is hectic. We got blacks killin' blacks, just 'cause we chasin' a life that is fake, but we don't see that this is not reality. It's a set up, a trap — a trap to lead us against each other, so the whites won't have to deal with us. They want to keep us blind so we can't get our proper day jobs, and run the country.

But now shhh changed. Now we got Obama. He found the light, and reversed the cycle. That's what we all need to do, so turn off your radio and TV and stay in school, unless you want to be made into a fool and end up a victim to statistics. Wake up and realize that life is not cool. One out of ten people survive, and that was the white people's goal, to kill us all, but their own.

Back in 1823 or around there (when slavery ended), the blacks built a city, and opened up our own businesses. We worked together. The war is not with each other. We all sisters and brothers, what happened to that? What happened to the days where we all supported each otha?

-D-Boii, San Francisco

From The Beat: Although you got a few facts wrong (the end of slavery came officially in 1863 with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation), we don't think this is racist (except, of course, that not all white people or all black people fit your description). Still, there is plenty of truth in what you write. When you think about it, what suggestions can you come up with to reverse this terrible picture? What kind of assistance from the outside (Jobs? Training? Education? A Black President?) would help to bring back that time of spiritual togetherness and cooperation, and what kind of assistance from the inside (Family structure? Fathers who do not abandon their families? Avoiding alcohol and drugs?) would bring about this community of like-minded people? We need the thinking and contributions of those like you who can get under the surface of things, and analyze not only history and the world you live in, but your own role in it. We appreciate this piece.

We worked together. The war is not with each other. We all sisters and brothers, what happened to that? What happened to the days where we all supported each otha?

The Story Of My Life

Throughout my life, I have experienced some things that will stick with me for the rest of my life. I have made certain mistakes in life that I wish I never made. They say making a mistake is normal, but they also say you should learn from that mistake. But for some reason, I seem to keep making the same mistakes over and over. And I never seem to learn from my mistakes.

I have been incarcerated numerous times and haven't learned my lesson. But here I am writing this on paper and I am not in denial anymore. I come from a dysfunctional family and now I have been blessed to have my own family. I have a one-year-old son and I love him with all my heart. I say this because I feel as though my parents didn't love me the way I love my own child.

As a child, my mom used to leave my younger brothers and I with her friends and she would never come back for us. We would have to find our own way back to our family. My little brother would always go to my grandma's house but I had too much pride to go to her house. I felt as if I could live and survive on my own without their help.

So my mom's friend took me to one of her friend's house and there were lots of kids there and I enjoyed myself playing with them. Then her friend heard my story and I guess felt sorry for me and took me in. From there I didn't go to school, and later I discovered the taste of alcohol. Then I began to drink and smoke to hide my feelings because I was hurting inside.

Once everything started going good for me, I thought, I got into a fight with someone else who lived in the same house so I packed up my stuff and left. From there I finally went to my grandma's house. I was so used to not having to follow any rules so I left because she had too many rules.

From there I lived from house to house, not having any guidance or home training. I started smoking weed and thought I liked it. But what happens when you can't support your habit? Then you have to freeloader off of everyone's stuff.

I started to see my friends wearing nice clothes and shoes so I came to the conclusion that I needed to get stuff like them. But how? There was only one way in my mind, and that was to sell drugs. I began selling drugs and got all of the things I desired. But with fast money come fast problems. Knowing that, I still continued what I was doing.

Then I caught my first case and that was the worse thing I could have done. Now I'm in the system and there is no way to get out. I kept getting locked up and finally I calmed down and got with my child's mother. Her name is Trinna. I fell in love and nothing mattered to me anymore.

Reality set in and I still didn't have any parents or love, or advice from my parents. From what I've learned, it takes a man to raise a man. A man can't raise himself. The next thing I knew, my girlfriend was pregnant! That was the best thing that ever happened to me. Then I got locked up during the fifth month of her pregnancy as soon as we found out we were having a baby boy. I finally got out when my son Orlando Jr. was one year old. I got out and started trying to give my son the life I never had but wished I had.

Now my girlfriend is pregnant again and where is the father? An incarcerated man, which is me.

-Orlando, Fresno

From The Beat: We are so touched by the beauty and sadness of your story. You have survived some of life's most difficult challenges, such as being left by your mother, falling into the trap of selling drugs, and now being a teen parent. You've traveled a long road, and you still have a long way to go, but don't ever give up, don't ever stop wanting better for yourself, and don't ever forget your own dreams. We commend you for wanting to take your life in a more positive direction. You are an example to others, a role model, a reminder that change can happen if you try.

Your Own Worst Enemy

This is the biggest, baddest, meanest, heartless, ugliest enemy you could ever meet.

This enemy is not only an enemy, but a thing that lives in me.

It gives me nightmares so I drop to my feet my heart doesn't beat when this enemy is in need.

It calls my name over and over wanting me to do bad things.

I try so hard, but the enemy looks at me and I cry every night because this enemy is me.

I look in the sky and dream of a better life with the enemy not inside, so I don't live a lie.

Why is this enemy inside when I'm so nice?

Why do I live this life with this weird enemy inside?

Why can't I hide?

- Shawnta, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: There are many people out there that are living with the same enemy you are, so don't live your life like you are alone and singled out. Ask for help, yes, it's easy to say to some one else, but for your sake please ask for help. There are things and people that can help with the enemy you speak of.

Family First

What matters to me is of course, family. Everybody should agree with me. Of course, there is money that matters to everybody too. But family is always first. Without money, you can't survive in this world. Sometimes, people kill people because of money. Some even risk their lives to get a buck or two. To me, money is a material object, but it brings other material objects that we need in life, such as a home, cars, clothes, and even food.

About family, they give us a warm feeling that we call love. That feeling is the strongest feeling that we can feel. Family matters to me because they will love me unconditionally no matter what I do. I will always love them unconditionally unconditionally, too, because my family the only one thing in the world I cherish. My love will never change for my family.

-Saetern, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: We agree with both points you make, Saetern: that money is necessary to get us what we need (and sometimes more than that, what we want) in life, but it's not even in the same league with the value of family love. What hurts is when money becomes so important, it either leads to losing your freedom, and therefore the closeness of family, or to someone's death, which leads to a family in permanent pain.

What Matters:

What's up Beat? Me, I'm all right. Well, just thinking, what really matters? Is it safety, education, food, clothes? Does all that really matter? To me, Beat, that's what did matter in the past. To me now what matters is doing the right thing, 'cause if I would've did the right thing out there, I wouldn't be in here right now.

Plus, all I was tryin' to do most of the time out there was screw around. I never really took the time to stop and think what matters, my life or my friends? Well, it didn't take long for me to figure that out. All my thought fell on one thing, and that was the right thing.

Well y'all, got to go.

-Thinker, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: We're sorry it took getting locked up to realize what's important in life, but some people never understand, so you're on your way to a better future than your past. Keep giving The Beat the benefit of your thinking. At the end of this wonderful piece of thinking, you gave us a the symbol for money as your Beat name. Not only do we not use symbols, but we think someone as thoughtful as you should come up with a more appropriate name, like Thinker!

Destined To Be A Mobster

These eyes of mine have seen the unspeakable, from gunshots to stabbings, to the unthinkable. I try to forget the past, but it seems insuperable seein' so many good homeboys in bad predicaments, sitting in a courtroom watching my father being led to confinement — 35 to life, 3rd strike on a count of domestic violence.

A ten-year-old boy, now the man of the house. I tried multiple times to keep the pills from my jefita's mouth, but I seemed to fail every time, which often led me finding her passed out on the kitchen ground. Every time I looked at her, I felt embarrassment — a pill popper spending all her time with drug addicts led to abandonment. I wanted nothing to do with her. I started to spend all my time with the homeboys just to maintain my composure. Eventually got locked up.

When will the struggle be over? In this life I live, I think never! That's why I'm destined to be a mobster forever.

-Nightmare, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: We don't agree that it's destiny that condemns you to a mobster's lifestyle, but the circumstances of your young life, over which you had no control. Those circumstances are a national disgrace, and should never exist in any child's life. But that unfortunate past cannot be changed. The future is something different, though. As a young adult, you have some control over your life, so we hope you use that excellent brain to examine what you'd really like to achieve in this life (the only one we've got), and then to honestly prescribe the best path to get there. If you do that, we think you'll see that being a "mobster" leads to dead ends, either literally or figuratively. There is so much more in life, and you have the potential to lead in a positive way. We hope you live up to that potential.

Someone To Turn To

As I was growing up I had a lot of struggles in my life. I didn't have both parents. My mom was on drugs and didn't care about me. My stepfather used to beat me. I always used to run away. As I got a little older I realized that wasn't the life I wanted. I started doing drugs when I was nine to hide my feelings because I had no one to go to for help. I got locked up, and always got kicked out of school for fighting. Then I started joining gangs because I thought that was where my family was, then I realized that's not who I wanted to be. I didn't care what happened to me whether alive or dead because I had no one to attend to me. I didn't care about my mom or what happened to her.

On my 16th birthday, I had my daughter. Since I didn't care for my life I was thirty minutes late for her birth and I regret that day. Then I tried to straighten out my life but it was hard. It felt like everyone was against me so I was on my own helping myself. Then on December 31 of the following year, my son was born. I was there and will never forget that day.

Now that I'm 17 years old, it's hard for me because 'till this day I still don't have anyone to go to. Now I have stopped doing drugs. I wish I never stopped but I have to for my kids. I am a father. Thank you for letting me express my feelings.

-Manuel, Fresno

From The Beat: It takes courage, patience and dedication to make positive, lasting change in your life. And by choosing to break away from the horrific cycle of oppression and deterioration that consumed the adults in your life, as you were growing up, you've taken the first step toward change. You've come a long way in life so don't let the mistakes from your past determine who you become you in the future. There is someone out there with a willing ear, wanting to hear your story, waiting for you to turn to him/her for help, so you should never feel as though there is no one for you to turn to. We hope you continue to stay involved in your son and daughter's lives, so they have someone to turn to when they need help.

Take A Guess Dude

I come from poverty
It's more jails than schools.
So take a guess dude
Why I am in a stressed mood
On the streets of Oakland we souls
Get eaten like vegetables
It's the home of the scraper on fo's
Gotta stay on ya tippie toes
Youngins quick to leave, ya froze
We higher than the fifth
Tear so we open all doors
And the smell of grapes is on our clothes
Dread lock white teeZ
And a mouth full of gold.
How could you tell me not to cry?
I've seen my own momma die right through these eyes
I've seen people laughin'
People cryin'
I've seen the old die young
Just 'cause some other person shot a gun
I've seen a man take his own life
You can't tell me such I've seen people live people die
People smile people cry
I've seen some crazy shhh in this lifetime;
I've seen my own brother get killed
So nothing can ever fill this space in my heart
when I found my mother dead in the park it left me in the dark
So please God just let it rain
So I can ease the pain why is it that everything around me dies,
That only gives me one ambition, to never close these eyes.

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: You keep it real as ever in these verses/the blessings prayers and the curses/but love will put you in reverse/moving away from the bad or the worse...

My Eyes Are Open To What Matters

Beat! It's Peanut from the max. The topic is what matters. To say what matters to me is my #1 family that always sticks by my side. And who else matters to me is my lady. She's the best thing that happened to me on 7-27-08, and she is part of my family now.

But last but not least is my freedom. Without my freedom I couldn't have got close to my family and to my lady. So for all the things that matter to me, I just think back on all the memories. It's crazy. I had everything going good, but one slip in my path got me back into this place that I never thought I would come back to. But I have to say I'm done with the BS when I get out so I could enjoy my family and lady, plus have my freedom back to appreciate the little things that God put in my life.

But I could be honest with myself and The Beat that this is a eye opener. So when I leave and get my time done, I'm going to continue my dreams and be a daddy plus a son to my mom. I'm going to cut this short until next time. But to all that are reading this, get out and think twice about life and the things you do. I'm serious.

-Peanutt, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: Oh yes, every heartfelt word in this fine piece is serious! As we grow, it takes different experiences to make us open our eyes to the reality (and seriousness) of life. In fact, some of us never grow enough to truly open our eyes. So, we think you are lucky to know what is important and what is not, and to dedicate yourself to the real treasures in life: family, freedom, love and respect for God's Creation. You're on a path to a better life, and we hope that others will read what you have written and take it to heart. Keep growing, thinking and writing!

Dark Life

Where I'm from, life ain't no joke,
 Girls are on the corner, the boys are cuttin' dope,
 Young kids gangbangin', like a professional cutthroat,
 Gettin' life for murder, our generation is losin' hope,
 Slangin' rocks as a young kid, like my big bro' did,
 Just tryin' to make that money, my name was getting big,
 Picked up my first gun, it was a 38 sig,
 Ram up on a dude, and split his wig,
 I'm headed towards hell, like it was defined by fate
 My mama always told me, son it's never too late,
 When she passed away, it took a part of me,
 Now I'm sittin' here just driftin' on a memory,
 I couldn't believe it, when I got that call
 My young homie just got life, but still rottin' in juvenile hall,
 When I get out, it's back to the park
 Doin' what we do when it turns dark
 Been through so much I just can't take it
 Police jackin' me up got my ass butt naked
 I've been doin' this for oh so long
 Society tellin' me everythin' I'm doin' is wrong
 They tellin' me how could you go so low?
 But how can they speak on me when they just don't know
 You can't blame me for my ways,
 After every dark night is just another rainy day.

-Reaper

From The Beat: Wow, Reaper, this is fantastic! You have a really great talent (poetry) and you should use it to your advantage. We are sorry about your loss, the way you've been struggling since then, and the way you think about certain things. We're going to repeat the same thing your mother told you—it's never too later. Trust us. It's never, never, ever too late. We know young people who have been in worst situation you're in and they have made it. You can make it as well. You just need the willpower to change your life. We expect to see more from you because with your talent and skills you can go anywhere.

It's Gonna Take A While

At the moment there is a lot to be changed, and I think it's gonna take a while to change it. I believe the white man has made poverty sink to its lowest level. The ghettos, the drugs being supplied by the CIA, the police brutalities. Just this week in Oakland a man (black man, of course) was killed by the police and the FS^%* excuse was "I was reaching for my taser, and shot him on accident in the heat of the moment."

A taser and a gun is two different weapons. They feel different and are located in two different places. If a police officer can't seem to get his taser when he needs it, then what is the Police Academy training those new cops? These rookie cops don't know what they are doing and are scared of the environment in which they "serve the law!" They are scared of this area and the youngstaz in it.

But back to the topic. I believe in change but I believe in a lot of work to change the position our country is in. A lot of things that Bush has done cannot be made up for... like the dead soldiers from this dumb war can never be brought back.

-Gass', Alameda

From The Beat: You make a lot of very powerful points here. And we are glad that we have a chance to print what you say. Have you experienced negative interactions with police before? Or, to pick up on a point, have you ever acted recklessly because of fear? (We are not condoning the cops' actions, but you make a good point when you talk about how even police are sometimes afraid of young people right now).

Ma Life

Yeah man, it's young Sleep, man. How you doin' Beat Within? I hope good. I hope y'all ain't gone let this economy bring y'all down, you understand. I know I ain't gone let it bring me down fa real, fa real. I'm still gone do my thang.

I hope with Barrack Obama as President he can change shhh around, you feel me. I been doing my thang as usual, you understand me. Hopefully I get out of here on the 2nd of January. Man, pray for me a'ight.

But yeah, my bra wrote me like he been coo' and when I get out I betta do coo'. Like my girl Camero said, when I get out I betta do good. Also fa real though, I am 'bouta turn my life around and do good. I'm tired of doing this thug shhh. It's time to turn my life around.

My mom said it's good because I'm seein' that way. I'm still a youngin fa real, fa real. I see a lot of my friends getting smacked off the map, but I don't want that to be me, you understand. I love my life and I got talent, so it would hurt if I threw that away to be faithful to the streets. I'm done. But on some real shhh, if I don't make it in my dreams, like go to the NFL or NBA, then I'm fasholey gone be one of them ninjas.

But yeah, to answer your question Beat, I don't love none mo' than my fam. But if it came down to it, I take my family over my money on some t'real shhh though. An' yeah, like I said, I'm done. I'm 'bouta turn my life around and start going to school, ya heard. But yeah, su whoooo, I'm out. Holla at yo' boy Sleep.

-Sleep, San Francisco

From The Beat: What kind of changes do you expect, or hope, the new President can bring? Like he said, change is not something one person can accomplish for the community or world. That responsibility falls on all our shoulders, and it's very encouraging to see that you are taking your responsibility seriously. We think you'll find that change brings with it some very exciting possibilities for your future that don't include lock-up.

As Time Goes By, We All Get Wiser

As the clock is ticking and the days go by, months go by, years go by, decades go by, you're put in a position which you wish you can change. But being locked up keeps you in a spot looking out your window wishing for freedom. Each day you learn a new thing, like a new word, a new subject. Keep in mind, these things are getting you wiser in here. You look back on the things you have done wrong, and you try to learn from your mistakes, and those thoughts can possibly get you wiser.

I've had so much shhh build up in one year, and how I experienced it was messed up. My uncle died on December 24, 2007, and that was the first time I experienced a death in my family. It is horrible to lose a family member. My whole entire family consists of six people, which is my mom, my baby brother, and sister and my beloved nephew. I do not know any of my other family members in Mexico, so screw them. So I learn on how it felt to lose a family member, and that has gotten me wiser because now I've felt the sorrow and grief of him gone.

Well stay up to all the homeboys who have lost a family member. Do your time and hit the streets a little more wiser.

-Chango, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: Yes, Chango, it is "horrible to lose a family member," which means that every death is horrible, since everybody is a member of somebody's family. Does this experience give you a new respect for everyone's life? If not, why not? If so, how will it affect or change what you do when you are on the outs once again, and able to make your own choices?

Confession

When I look at your face I see a pretty lil' girl.
 When I look into your eyes I see your pain.
 When I look at your body I see bruises.
 When I touch you, you back away.
 When I try to kiss you, you hit me and tell me to stop.
 When I try to be with you,
 you tell me you're in love with another girl,
 so I guess I will stop trying to be with you.
 When I tell you I am falling for you,
 you say to stop and I know I've only known you for a while
 when I tell you I am going to stop playing lil' kids games.
 You laugh at me
 when I tell you; I will be there for you through good and bad.
 When I want to see you happy you tell me you are,
 but when I take a look into your eyes again
 I see you're not happy,
 but there is nothing I can do any more.

-Amanda, Land Of Enchantment, New Mexico

From The Beat: These are the words of some one who truly cares. One question for you, you mentioned that this person backs away from you when you try to comfort them because of the bruises. Are you the one that caused these bruises or was it someone else? In either case, you should get your friend help before these bruises become something more serious.

Cancer

One day, the day was going all well, when my mom walks into my room saying, "Honey, I need to tell you something. Your father has cancer."

I thought my life was over. Me and my dad were never close and when I saw him tears came to my eyes.

I got closer and closer to my father; my dad is a very strong guy. My dad would live life like it's his last day everyday.

I could tell in my dad's eyes that he was getting weaker and weaker everyday. But 'til this day my dad is still fighting the cancer and is trying to get through it. And now because I don't know when my dad is gonna be gone I treat him everyday like it's his last. God is watching over you. I love you.

-Ana, Monterey

From The Beat: It is great that you and your father are so much closer, but unfortunate it had to happen in such circumstances. It sounds like your father is a fighter and has a great amount of support from his family. Cherish every moment with him and your family. Our thoughts are with you and your father. You'll make it through this rough patch in your life.

On The Road To Change

Yes I do wanna change and do right, at school. And help my mom out and do good... succeed in life. The most thing that means to me is my family, my education, my life. The block doesn't mean nothing to me; it's just another block that we sure don't own.

I really would like to change and do what I'm supposed to do when I'm supposed to do it. I learned a lot this year to just do right and succeed, educate myself, and not let the system pimp me. I'm going to get knowledge from these books and not the streets...

I want to be alive when I'm twenty-one. I want to grow and be happy with what I'm doing in life... I don't like this place, don't like to be locked up.

I pray to god that I get out on December 30th. And yes I am proud to have a black president.

Sincerely, Robert

Pray for me, please.

-Robert, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love your positive attitude about yourself and the future, Robert. Your attitude is the most important predictor of future success, and we believe you will find that success if continue to put your family, your education and your life first. They say that "attitude determines altitude," so we predict you will just keep moving up. Keep writing and keep educating yourself... and us!

HECTIC

I'm gon' go down the list 'cause I know a lotta people ain't gon' feel me on this one. So here it goes.

H. The H in hectic to me means a lot of things. And the first one is "hustler" 'cause I'm always tryna get it by any and every means at all times and not always the wrong way either. But when the hard times come, what you gon' do?

E. E stands for, always havin' energy you not gon' be willin' to put yourself out there in corporate America, instead a lotta cats be lazy, sellin' drugs, robbin' and stealin' or grow up dependin' on somebody else, and be 40 still at home with they momma.

C. The C stands for confidence. The way I see it, if you don't have no type of confidence in yourself you ain't gone never succeed or finish anything you start, cause you either quit and give up, or you just completely say forget it, and forget about it when it's really be your million dollar ticket to whatever or wherever you wanna go and do.

T. Now on to tha T, which stands for timing. Everybody gotta have timing 'cause if you know how to keep track of yo' time, it's gone be something important, pleasurable, and profitable stuff that you not gon' never to see 'cause you not gon' be able to pay attention or keep track of time.

I. Now the I has two meanings. The first one is I, 'cause if you don't put yourself first, you gon' stand for nothing and fall for anything. 'Cause everybody else is gon' have you at their beck and call, doin' any and everything they say or want you to do and the second is for impatience or important and the reason I say that is 'cause we have to do a bunch of important things. But they have no more importance, for no meaning, so most of the shhh we do be a waste of time.

C. Now the second I stand for control and I'm writin' on this one 'cause a lotta cats ain't got no type of control and always wind up doin' shhh they regret and wish they never did or find themselves in a situation that they wish they could but can't get out of and then be mad at theyself for doin' it but it be that way sometimes.

-Lil Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: You've come a long way since 5 P's and an S, Lil' Solid, and we are proud and honored that you have chosen to continue sharing y our struggles, ideas and creativity with The Beat community for so long. We are looking forward to what you spell out for the words FREEDOM, and ADULT.

What Matters?

What matters to me most is to see things change for myself and those around me (example: family, friends, members of community.) What matters to me is knowing that that whatever happens to me, no matter what it is, I still have the love and support of my family and closest friends.

My freedom is something that matters to me, but I didn't realize how important it really was 'til it was taken away from me. One thing that I thought was important to me was making money, but now I know that being able to laugh, smile, joke and see my mother proud is more important than anything! And that's real!

-Ballard, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're so right. The things that last — love of family, pride in accomplishment, respecting others in exchange for their respect — are worth more than gold, and you are a very wise young man to recognize that so early. In addition to your wisdom, you will need the courage to say "No" when that is appropriate, even if it means you might lose some "friends" in the process. We think you have that courage, but the future will be written by you.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Beat,

I am very disappointed! In issue 13.48, in The Beat Without section, a writer named "Mr. Daniels" wrote a piece called "things to take with you on your journey." It goes on to list a number of things that I feel is especially offensive. Number 11 states "stay away from homosexuals at all cost." What the hell Beat? How could you allow this in your mag? Maybe he's talking about AIDS or something, but still very offensive. I'm disappointed Beat.

-Some Square, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for your commentary, as we said in workshop, we appreciate the fact that you stepped up and pointed this out. The Beat truly is YOUR publication, so when you or any of our readers takes responsibility for calling our attention to issues in the publication, you are just making us better. We are against hating on anyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, and you guessed it, sexual orientation. We also want to add, Mr. Daniels is writing us from a correctional institution, we have no clue what he has/is experiencing, so like you or any writer, he deserves to be heard. It is his views, his experience. We do not agree with everything published in The BEat, and when you find something you dislike, step up and challenge the commentary.

Skip's Broadcast: What Matters?

What's poppin', Beat? Me? You know the young ninja Skip stayin' from under the radar because I'm oh so fly, ya heard me? But yeah, I be havin' a lot of ninjas sayin' shhhh don't matter! Tryna butter theselves up by talkin' out the sides of they necks to impress these ninjas in here!

Me personally, I ain't gotta impress none of these dudes in here, because they in the same position as me or even worse, so they ain't better or worse than myself, ya dig?

But what matters to me? My life matters because ain't nobody out here living my life but me. That's what makes every person unique because they livin' they own life. But it's not just me in general, just everything associated or having something to do with my life — my family, friends, block — all the shhhh matters to me because it's in my life.

-Fly Boy Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: It makes us laugh to picture someone trying to talk out the side of their neck, but it makes us proud that you value your life and what it is in it. When you value your own life, you can see the value in others, and that makes for the foundation for a decent life, a decent community. You have all the ingredients to become a successful, contributing member of society, even a leader, a teacher — except for your freedom, which will come.

I Believe

If I could go back to the day I ran from my probation officer, I wouldn't run. I would sit and wait for her to come and pick me up. The man I have known to love as my boyfriend I wouldn't know, but today I would also have a girt more precious than gold. My freedom.

I believe that America isn't free

We are oppressed by Capitol Hill

I believe that my mother's and father's generation didn't do us justice, for if they did...would Oakland be the same?

I believe that everyone can change

I hope that one-day America will live up to the preamble, which we put on the constitution as an afterthought...

I believe that I am superwoman

And I will overcome every obstacle in my life.

-Ashley, Alameda

From the Beat: If you live up to the pride and talent that shows through in this wonderful poem then yes Ashley, you WILL be able to overcome every obstacle. So tell us, what are the mental obstacles that you are having to work on?

What Kind of Life Do You Want?

I want a life where I don't have to keep watching my back every 5 seconds. Or a life where all I do is sell dope, be in prison, and not know my own kids. I plan to be the better man that my father never was to always be with my kids and show them that they have me for whatever they want. And be there for my wife. Gangs aint for me and the streets make it so weak every time I'm in the hood I get crazy but not no more not the new me cause now I'm a man with a dream, and hope that's what I want for my life.

-Young J, Alameda

From The Beat: Well it's the week of the birthday of that other man who had a dream, so we hope you soak up some of that love and hope and possibility to make your own dream come true. It's a new year, we say we want change. Many think we can do it if we work together. Come on.

Skip's Broadcast: In This Life I Lead, Pt. 1

I'm on it! They can't stop me even if they stopped me! What's really poppin' with The Beat, man? It's that young hot head, Skip. Man, I'm still maintaining whateva it is to be maintained in here.

But yeah, it's a lot of people gettin' my personality confused. They read my writings and see me in person and be like, wtf? I'ma say it like this: "I'm the opposite of moderate, immaculately polished with the spirit of a hustler and the swagger of a college kid, allergic to the counterfeit, impartial to the politics, articulate but still grab a ninja by the collar quick." Just let the confused know in a few words but...

Ahem excuse me. Where was I? I lead a troubled lifestyle, man. I partially regret some of the stuff I did, but no, not really because we make mistakes to learn from them and we learn from them to grow beyond them and become even wiser to not make the same ones over. I grew up around mistakes, so of course I wouldn't be immune to them, right?

Some people think they are better than others and act like their fecal matter don't give off a foul odor (or in short, they act like they shhhh don't stank). Well, newsflash, it does. Even your favorite rapper, singer, actor or the president has a flaw! But I have been brainwashed by the media unfortunately to portray this image they paint me as a young, black, delinquent, rebellious, black, weed smoking, pill poppin', black. Shall I go on?

I have been in and of here eight times, man. They practically raised me. I know even the rules by heart and everything. But yeah, I hope and pray to escalate from this messed up situation.

I miss my mama bruh fo' real. I'm 18 years old sayin' that shhhh, but I don't care. I really do. I ain't lived with my mama since 2005, and I'm homesick. I done been in a total of 12 group homes in the foster system alone and four in the probation department. Now it ain't a sympathy factor I'm tryin' to get because I can cry pretty well on my own. I'm just sayin' I have the misfortune... (To be continued)

-Fly Boy Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: Come on Skip. That quotation about being the opposite of moderate, articulate, etc., is taken from someone else's words! If you quote someone, you have to say who you are quoting so people don't confuse your words with someone else's, you dig? And your own words are fine ones! You may not be looking for sympathy from us, but you've got it anyway. For someone with as much turmoil and disruption in his young life as you've experienced, we truly admire your spirit and determination to make something different of your future. As for missing your mama, you never outgrow that feeling, even after she is gone and you are a great grandfather. We look forward to the continuation of this piece.

My Dad Did It, And So Can I

I know I did some bad things in my life, but I really don't like it here. I really wish I didn't do what I did, but I did. I really want to make my dad and grandmother proud.

All my life I been doing bad things, like getting kicked out of school, getting bad grades. But when I get out of here, I'm going to make a change. I am going to try to get a job and get out of high school go to college. I want to make my dad and grandmother proud of me. And I pray that I get out of here. I am no coming back.

When I was young, my dad couldn't afford the things he could afford now. We was living in the projects. My dad was on drugs. He couldn't take care of us, so we was placed in foster care. It was hard for me and my sister because we had got split up. I cried the first night when I was there, and I kept getting into fights so they kept moving me. My dad wanted to get his life together and get us back. So he did! I'm so cool with being back with my dad, but my sis is still in foster care, and that's my life.

-Mario, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can understand how so much disruption in your young life could lead you to do badly in school, and have other problems. But now that you have your dad's example of getting his own life back on track, you know that you can get your life back on track, too. Wishing you had not done what led you to this lock-up is important, but far more important is what you do in the future. Keep your promise to finish school. It may be hard, but it's the foundation of a decent future, so it's worth the effort. If you do that, you will not only make your dad and grandmother proud, you will make yourself proud, too.

I wasn't there to watch him being born. Hope he can forgive me. I want to let him know that daddy messed up when he was 16 years old and is now paying the consequences.

Tired

Tired of coming back

Tired of waking up seeing a window toilet and sink

Tired of seeing my family cry over the shhh I have done

Tired of hearing that my mom cries over and over every night

Tired of looking over my shoulder and wondering

If this is it, am I finally gonna get hit

Tired of not walking certain street with out some one

trying to shank me with a knife or shoot at me at night

Tired of ninjas saying they hard but I call them fake cause when it comes down they will brake

Tired of picking up a gun, og telling me go have some fun

Tired of getting locked up thinking of the shhh I done

Tired of pouring out Henny for the homies that are gone.

Tired of being true to the game knowing I'ma end up in dead end.

Tired of the tears, pain and sorrow, I just wish I have another life tomorrow. Thanks to this unit you (all) help me a lot, especially Fig.

-Tapia, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a really great piece - thanks for sharing with The Beat. Sounds like there's a lot about your life you want to change, which is a good start to making change happen. Next step is to figure out what you can do, small or big, to get yourself closer to where you want to be.

Return To Yesterday

If I could go back in time, what would I do? Except for the pain I've caused others, I wouldn't change crap. Now let me explain why.

First I wouldn't know what I know now. And I wouldn't trade that knowledge. I don't regret many of my hardships because they have made me who I am now. What I am going through is hard, but many out there are going through a lot worse. For all the hard and difficult days and nights, there will be better days. People don't see life as it is. They see it through their own windows or perspectives. Everyone has a different point of view and no one is going to change unless they want to.

I'm going to be leaving for county in a few months because the system has decided to try me as an adult. I honestly think that life in prison isn't a reasonable punishment. There are many other choices, like YA. Go ahead, give me time in prison, but not life. The adult system is established for punishment, and the juvenile system is established for rehabilitation.

I want to let my son know that I really am sorry for everything. I wasn't there to watch him being born. Hope he can forgive me. I want to let him know that daddy messed up when he was 16 years old and is now paying the consequences. I am sorry for all the damages I've caused. But this has made me who I am now - a better person. Wish me luck. Love and respect to all.

-Oscar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Oscar, we have watched you grow as a person. You're not the same fellow who came in here at 16, lost and confused. We too hope that 'the system' will recognize that you've come a long way and that you have something to offer the world. Keep thinking and keep writing. We wonder if you've had a chance to read 'Finding Freedom'. If you haven't, please let us know. We'll try to track down a copy for you.

Change

Yes I do believe in the promise of change. I think electing Barack Obama for president was a great change, not just for black Americans, but for all races and for our country.

Barack Obama can make a change because for hundreds of years people put down our race of African Americans and said we will be nothing but look at us now, we went from slaves to being in the white house.

By electing a black president, that told me that I shouldn't give up on my dreams. Shhh if he can make it I definitely can. I believe I can change my life and by being locked up that really made me think, do I really wanna live my life like this.

I think being in here changed me a lot. I got closer to God, my family and my education. I accomplished things I thought I could never do like read whole chapter books. I read almost 5 whole books. That changed my whole person. I think God had me locked up for a reason, this little experience was a big wake up call.

What matter to me most is my family. I say my family because they will always be down to ride for you through thick and thin. Another reason I choose my family is because you can't always trust friends. The friend you think that's gone ride or die for you might be the one that's gone stamp you, and by stamp I mean stab you in the back. Like, you put all your trust in him and when you turn your back he gone steal from, rob you, or worst kill you. Or when you go to jail that potna home boy gone screwyou over.

-Dionte, Alameda

From The Beat: It's great that you've made positive things come out of being locked up. Lots of people just bide their time, just waiting to get out and leave with no lessons learned, no thought put into what happened. The biggest change will be when you leave, where you can hopefully continue the change instead of going back to the old day to day stuff. It can be really hard sometimes, but you've already started change, so we know you can keep it going!

Life Do Matter!

What's up with The Beat? This Sergeant Newt in this hole. I'm back strap, ya heard me. But I'm tired of being in here. They trying to send me off for nothing. It feel like my life doesn't matter but it really do.

If I wanna be with my mom my sister, my friends, the females — but my family the most — I gotta start making my changes myself. I need to bring God in my life. I need to stop beefing and doing this and doing that if I wanna live my life right instead of living it in a sinful way every day on the outs.

Everybody, it's time to buckle up. Life is not a joke. God taking everybody every day, even the ones that doing good. So it's finna be '09. We need to change our life around. But I'm out this thang, chea boom. I love you Beat... Chea boom, shots fired, ya heard me!

-Yung J. Newt, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like your new attitude about change and not breaking God's laws will take you far from here. Be careful, though. You say they want to send you away "for nothing," but if it's "nothing" that led you here, then you might be tempted to do that "nothing" again — and face the same consequences or worse. What's your plan? What are the specific things you want to do that you didn't do before? What are the specific things you want to stop doing that you did before? Give us a picture of your future and how you're going to achieve it.

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

As I sit in my cell I realize I have made many mistakes. Some were not made on purpose, some were done out of spite, still others were done out of blind love and misguided devotion. As I realize all of these things I come to a few conclusions, for myself and maybe others who are in a similar situation.

When I get out, back to the real world, there are certain priorities that need to take place, be added/removed.

As it stands, I hold my friends, money, possessions, family at heart in that order. That's not right. Though my friends always seem to be there for me, my family is the one supporting me among many other important things. Next, my money, though it is important on many levels, it shouldn't consume my life to the point that I have to resort to illegal activity. Third, my possessions of the past, present, and future will be prized, but what value do they hold over the ability to support yourself and your family.

Last, my family, they're always there for me even when I hate and reject them. They have done much for me and have received little in return. This isn't how I should live and I shouldn't force others to cope with this.

Though all these items have a place, they need to be in the order that gives back the most. I won't to tell you the order you should put your priorities in but be sure that you return the respect that you first received. If you don't, you may be effectively burning the only bridge most people hold dear and resort to in a time of extreme need. Though I regret what I have done and ruined many things I shouldn't have taken for granted, but did.

I need to, and will, repent and make amends for the wrong that I have done and hopefully ease the pain and suffering that I have caused. You too as a reader may feel similar or different but make sure that it doesn't ruin the thing you hold dear and probably take for granted.

-Jeremy, Alameda

From The Beat: Jeremy, thank you for your heartfelt piece. As you say, it is wrong to take people for granted, especially family who have been there for you, but this is something that most teenagers do, not just ones who are locked up. You say you have done wrong in the past but we are confident that you can do doubly right in the future. Your whole life is ahead of you, and you can use your experience and wisdom to make sure you make the right choices from now on, and that you prioritize those who love and respect you.

What Makes Life Worth Living

They say life is worth living or so it seems.

What makes it worth living —

what's there to help you endure the hardships and pain? Is it the block or your freedom to do as you please 'till the cops show up and you're no longer on top of things.

What makes life worth living,

who will be there to post bail, hold you down, let you know they care.

Is it the people who were around when you had money

to spend and as long as you had some dro they were ya best friend?

But when it's all gone tell me if you hear from them,

then when the whips die down and the block get hot,

who's there to help you

'cause they damn sure know when you sitting in yo' cell and you finally realize yo family was there when all yo' ninjas wanted to do was ride.

You push them to the back of yo' mind

now you down and that's the test you lived

yo' way being a thug.

You thought you knew what was best,

now you doing 25 to life and you just now realize your way wasn't right.

-Sadisha, Alameda

From The Beat: It's such a sad thing to realize your mistakes when it's too late. Good thing it's not too late for you — lean not to make the mistake now so you don't have regrets.

Yes We Can Can

We can change, if we have the will, we can change, if we make a deal, with ourselves, Obama is here to help. We can change, if we have determination.

Yes, we can deal this nation.

Anything is possible, 'cause Obama unstoppable.

We can make a change. A black president is a start,

but you have to want change within our hearts.

Yes we can change this genocide, killing and stealing trying to provide.

It doesn't feed the hunger of getting money, so we commit crimes.

Yes we can change our lives with driven determination.

We will win this fight, yes we can, yes we can, yes we can.

-Tayana, Alameda

From The Beat: Great piece — we at The Beat are constantly impressed with your unit's ability to express yourselves on paper. What do you think you can do, specifically, to help change happen?

As Time Go By

We say goodbye to 2008, but what's to come in 2009?

As days go by, as time fly, will we survive, will we still be alive?

How would our lives end up, do we even think about this stuff?

'Cause time get rough every year, so what is your fear?

Is it inside, is it in your mind?

We struggle everyday to survive.

What have you learned, is it your turn?

If you don't wake your life up, it will burn.

But will you learn, will our lives change, or would it be the same?

-Shanae, Alameda

From The Beat: Great poem — thanks for sharing. You ask a lot of questions, but do you have any answers? Are these questions you're asking yourself too?

Hello 2009

As I say goodbye to 2008, I've made some new changes. One is to think before I act because actions speak louder than words. Another is that I've promised to hang out with the right crowd.

Last year I did not know that I was able to have a job permit. One thing that has added to my wisdom bank is to hang around the people I would love to be like and also to find out more about them.

One new thing about my personality is that I've learned how to ignore situations and to overcome problems physically or mentally. I've acquired this new knowledge by being incarcerated. It affects me in a positive manner as I enter the new year and hopefully beyond.

-Devonte, Fresno

From The Beat: Thank you for being so thoughtful in your writing and also for thinking deeply about the things you need to change. Sometimes that can be hard to do because we don't want to change, but the things you mention here are important steps to becoming a more successful and happy person. Good luck to you, and keep us posted on your progress.

Knowing Your Own Beliefs

What's crackin' with The Beat? This yo' boy G-Man, dawg. But check this out. I hate when people don't use their brains, but I can't talk 'cause I'm in this g thang too. People fail to think about decisions that are easy to make.

Having said that, we all don't know our own beliefs because we fail to think bout simple shhh. So if you don't know your own beliefs, you don't think right, and if you don't think you "Never" fail to make stupid decisions.

-G-Man, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate what you say here, but we still don't have a clear idea of what you believe. Maybe you didn't use your brain when you did what led here, but it's clear that you're using your brain now, so where does your thinking lead you? When you're again breathing free air, how will using your brain make your future different from your past?

Hard Work

Some things that matter to me is making money, having pride in myself, but most of all, making my moms proud. I love making my moms proud because she wants me to succeed, and that's the least I could do for my family and myself.

I love making money and being able to show my moms the proof that I work for my money legit. Everyone works hard for their money, even if they get it different ways. Hard work is hard work, no matter what, and they can't take the hard work away from this young generation.

-Leaver, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you love you mom enough to hold onto your freedom, you will make both her and yourself proud. Yes, hard work is hard work, but some of that hard work leads to places like this and some does not. Remember that "slow and steady" wins the race, and taking shortcuts only holds you back.

What Matters

What matters to me is my family. But I would have to say my freedom because my freedom come with so much, for instance love, fun, joy, education. I love that feeling being able to have freedom. But being in here for so long, you forget what freedom feels like. I want to experience it. I can't wait to have it back.

-Flea, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: Besides life itself, freedom is probably the most important gift we have. We hope when you do experience it again, you remember what it was like not to have it so that you never give it up again.

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

Well first and foremost, I would like to give my respect to all the homeboys. This the homeboy G coming at you from the max. Today I'm going to be writing about how much wiser I am from last year. I learned a lot of stuff this year, like about how some charges are more serious than I thought. If I would have known that before, then maybe I wouldn't be in the situation I am in right now, facing a life sentence in prison. If I would have known I could get life, then I would have been extra careful about what I did. I would have second thoughts.

I also learned about (direct file), which means I get tried as an adult right away without going through a fitness. If I would've known about this, then I probably would have been smarter and I wouldn't again, be in this situation. But this is what I learned this last year.

-Lil' G, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: Gaining new knowledge is always a good thing, even though it sometimes comes too late. But we're confused about why you would do something you KNOW can earn you years in prison, but say it would have made you think and act more carefully if you had known it could lead to a life sentence. Does this mean you were willing to give up years of your life, but not all of your life? Why would you be willing to hand away your freedom for any length of time? We hope others reading your piece take it to heart so that they do not end up in the situation too many young people find themselves in, wishing "If only..."

Juvenile

In juvenile I learned how to respect staff more in a mature manner. And I learned how to get along with more people from all over the city. But other than that, staying at this juvenile is nothing nice. You don't got no females in here.

But what I most learned is that "There is more than what meets the eye," meaning there's more in a person than what you see. I learned to try to stay free at all times and stay alive on the outside.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you've learned some valuable life lessons in here. But how will what you learn keep you from coming back? What will you do that's different from the past?

This Is What Matters In Life

What matters in my life are friends my friends. Also money is another important thing in life. My family and school also matter. Food places too because I gotta eat. Also my freedom matters to me. My future is another thing too. I want to make my dad proud. And my mom, my family too.

Why do these things matter to me? Because I care about them and I want to have a job in the future. I want to make myself proud. I want to respect my family. I want to do something with my life. I want to keep going to church more every week. I want to stop getting into trouble. I want to start reading the bible more. I want to have kids in life. I want to care about my family more instead of just myself.

I want to be someone. I need to stop stealing in life and start doing good. I want to see my dad's grandma again. I want to see my grandpa who lives in another state because he tried to kill himself. I don't know where he is. My mom kicked him out of the house.

-Ricky, Fresno

From The Beat: The way you've written this, sort of as a list and in that powerful "I" voice, is strong because it's almost like you are making declarations to affirm that these are the things you stand up for and believe in. It shows us that you are an intelligent young man who cares not only about himself but others around him. Keep that spirit alive, and in time, we hope you will have the chance to see your grandpa again.

Don't Even Trip

Sittin' here in my cell
Makes me think about my life in hell
Homies dyin' mom is sick
Trying hard not to trip
In here stressing, going mad
Feeling guilty, feeling bad
Feeling hopeless feeling frustrated
I guess I'm stuck and I'm hated
Stuck to live with other felons
Thinking about God and the heavens
Trying to turn my life around
Maybe making a family not fooling around
Ask 'bout me
Don't even trip

-Ruben, Alameda

From The Beat: We feel the pain in this poem, and also the love, stress and desire for something better. We bet a lot of your readers will feel this too. Times are hard, right, but we hope writing this lightened your load. Don't even trip!!

Scared of Myself

I picked this topic because I go to court soon, to hear the verdict of my innocence or bein' guilty, which means if I got to go home or not, after basically bein' in here for almost a full 3-6-5, so hopefully I do go home but that's when the point of this piece comes into play because I've missed the holidays last year, my birthday and all the rest of 'em, except two which are Fourth of July and Christmas, 'cause it's not here yet and that's why I'm scared of myself, 'cause I missed two of my family members funerals, and it's already hectic, but it's only gonna get worse, cause I might be fresh out hopefully (keep fingers crossed.)

I hope I go home but I do I already know that I got a slight chance to slide into the lifestyle I'm so completely done with, but bein' in here for all that time it just makes you feel like them chains to tha sheets is never gonna open and you stuck in that dark dungeon forever. I just hope with me I get to close the door to the old house and be positive about where my new one should be located, 'cause if I do fall back, it's gonna be havoc and mayhem.

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: If you weren't scared, we would be, because you are truly going into your future with all your eyes wide open? The drama will be there, but it will be you who decides on how to respond to it. Have you been preparing yourself for this challenge mentally? If so, how?

Out This Thang!

Wha's good? This yo' Daddy Kidd.

Yay, Yay, I'm out this thang on my birthday, 29th or on the 30th of December. I can't say that I ain't coming back, but all I gotta say to all my hater, forget you! Ha ha. Yup, all you two-faced fools can go to hell. Y'all ain't doing what y'all been talking about.

Well anyways, I'm going to a group home in Fresno. Yup, I'm slippin' hella hard out there. But I ain't out there to impress. I'm going there to prove to the system that us Latinos can change in our own teen lives.

Damn, 2009 is here already. I thank god that me and people that I care and love are still here to support each other. Well that's all I have to say. All right then, stay safe. Late.

-Daddy Kidd, San Francisco

From The Beat: By now, you're already out of the hall and at your placement. If you read this, we hope you keep your promise to prove that you can make the changes you know you need to make. This is the time to make your foundation strong by finishing school and staying out of places like this. As the new President has said, "Yes, we can."

Be A Better Man!

Wha's up Beat! It's your boy Miguel coming straight from the halls of San Francisco, keeping my head up, asking God to help me out so I can have my freedom back and be with my family and change my life. I don't want to be in and out just like my father. It's hard to see my moms suffer for the wrong things I do.

Homies say they got your back. When something happens they don't care. It's whatever. That's why I'm always watching my back for anything.

Mayne, life is hard. I want to change but it's hard. I ask the Lord to help me out. He's the only one that can help me out and go for a better life, feel me. The streets ain't nothing good. There's a lot of fools out there trying to bang when they don't even know none about the game! Grow up! Be a better man!

I went through many stuff... could've been killed many times! Thanks to God, I'm alive doing time trying to stay strong, trying to find my way out, to look for God.

Well, a'ight then, mayne, to all the homies that are locked up, keep your head up. Be a soldier, mayne. A'ight then, homies, I'm out. God bless. Late.

-Grimey, San Francisco

From The Beat: If the Lord helps those that help themselves, then you have to do your part to help yourself. Yes, it is hard to do right and not get caught up, but then, it's also hard when you do get caught up. So you have to make a choice between two hard alternatives — more of the same, which means more lock-up, or a different path, which could lead to a much better future. It's good to ask God for help, but you also have to listen to what God is asking of you... (The Beat does not do lists of R.I.P.s...)

Doing Something With My Life

What's up wit' it, Beat? Yeah, I'm finna talk about one year older. one year wiser. But yeah, I feel that this year I messed up because I was acting very childish and young. But now that I did time in jail, I worked on myself and got myself together.

Self-discipline is a good thing 'cause now I see things different. I'm worried about myself and not others. I want to do something with my life beside being the way.

-Felix, San Francisco

From The Beat: We all mature at our own speed, Felix. You're fortunate, because some people never mature at all! We admire you for taking a good look at yourself and your life, and seeing that you want something good to come of it. Can you share some of your plan for achieving what you want?

Obama's Tactics

Yes, I believe in the black man who they call Mr. Obama. His tactics were genius; he spoke to and for the people. Also, they come from the same background as the majority of his voters. But people fail to realize that the way he used to win over his votes was the same way Hitler did. He used speech as his attack, which led people to believe in him and follow in his steps, which is a ironic thing, but it worked.

Deeply, I feel that he has a lot to accomplish and he has set up a very high goal for hisself that some people doubt he can commit to. He has so far picked a strong cabinet that can back him up which I feel is a good thing for him. So yes, I do think he can bring this nation back.

-Dow Jones, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is an interesting point of view. Don't you think that all people running for president rely on speeches to get people to vote for them? Hitler certainly relied on his speech making to gain power, but his speeches were calls for racial superiority and filled with huge lies. Do you think that describes Obama's speeches? We hope President Obama can "bring this nation back," even though he is inheriting a terrible national economy and crushing world problems. One thing he's already accomplished though, which is that he has given us all new hope.

Choices Matter

To me, everything matters. The reason why is because everything happens for a reason and every reason matters. Our circle of life is surrounding everything on earth that lives. Everything has matter. My friends matter. My enemies even matter because if they weren't here who would I take my anger out on. I know it sounds bad but it's life, and life matters.

Being attracted to what someone does doesn't make you a bad person, but being attracted to someone's mind makes you a better person for the good or for the worst. Choices Matter.

-Dumpa, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, choices matter — and every choice we make (and every choice we don't make) carries with it consequences that matter. So tell us, what choices do you plan to make when you touch down that are different from the choices you made that led you here? What kind of minds are you attracted to?

God Gave Me A Present For Christmas

God gave me another chance to shine.
Going to school is what's in my empty mind.
Money ain't a option, it only give you enemies.
I always thought it was my friends over my family.
They haven't visit me one time since I been here.
Ninjas talking smack really doesn't fear me.
Trying to find a way to eat every time I'm hungry.
Came in juvie, I was so lonely.
Always remember Hunter gonna bounce back.
With my last line, I'm gonna end my rap.

-Hunter, San Francisco

From The Beat: If going to school is what's filling your "empty mind," then it won't be empty for long. The love of family and the strength that loves gives you is the true treasure that no system or individual can take away from you. It sounds like you got the best Christmas present anyone could get.

Older And Wiser

In '08, I learned it's time to have ya paper straight because we have a colored president and that open doors for a certain group in society.

I also learned in '08 coming in and out of jail, it's way better to have nothing but be with you family than be in jail and have nothing. Coming to jail you ain't getting nowhere.

-Sb

From The Beat: What are the new doors you expect to open because of our new president? Does his election inspire you to make any changes in your life on the outs? (We could not read your first name, so we only used your initials...)

Yes We Can

I don't believe that the new president (Barack Obama) is going to change anything. I think he is just going to improve on the things that are already there.

I believe that I can make a change in my life because once I get out of YGC I'M NEVER COMING BACK. That's my promise. I'm going to get out and never get in any type of trouble that will get me back in here. I promise. When I'm in that cell looking out the window, all I think about is what I'm going to do when I get out.

-Ameer, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, you can! We believe your promise, Ameer, but promises are not enough. You need a real plan to follow so that you can avoid the temptations that will still be out there when you touch down. Finish school; don't get into fights; don't break any laws. Those are best prescriptions for a decent and free life.

No More Excuses

With Barack being president, people should have a new perspective of life. If you are black it's no more excuses. "Can't" shouldn't be in your vocabulary, because Obama "can" and did. So it's time for people to take responsibility for their actions.

The world is going to be a whole lot better. I just can't wait to see!

-Lil' Fred, Alameda

From The Beat: We like the passion and conviction in what you write. How would you feel if a white person told you, now that Obama has won there are no more excuses. Would it feel different coming to you from a person who wasn't black?

GED

I passed two parts of my GED tests and I already took two more. One more to go, then I'm done and I'm going to try to get released early. I got a 2-year sentence here, and I've only done thirteen months. Seventeen more months to go. But you never know. I might get lucky.

I'm going crazy in here with no girls. But yeah to my brother that's in here stay up and just let those shhh talkers in your unit talk. Late.

-Angel, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire what you have accomplished, not just towards achieving your GED but in your thinking. We hope this does lead to an early release and that you will be able to negotiate the temptations on the outs as well as you have negotiated the difficulties in here. We also think it's excellent advice to just let the haters hate, and focus on yourself.

Drug Abuse!

The problem with drug use is drug abuse. It's not only the money they lose but they marbles too. From high schoolers to home schoolers to grade schoolers, drug abuse even affects pre-schoolers! It's a shame they just gotta have it to bask in until they money gone.

No money means a effin' broken home, so ninjas get they hustle on.

Same old people posted at the same damn spot.

Love for the drug becomin' white hot.

Same friends same eyes, still blood shot

Gamblin' with they lives like they playin' at the slots!

-Some Square, Alameda

From The Beat: Good rhyme, you might need to come up with a new nickname besides "Square" something that acknowledges the skills and artistry of your writing style. Peace.

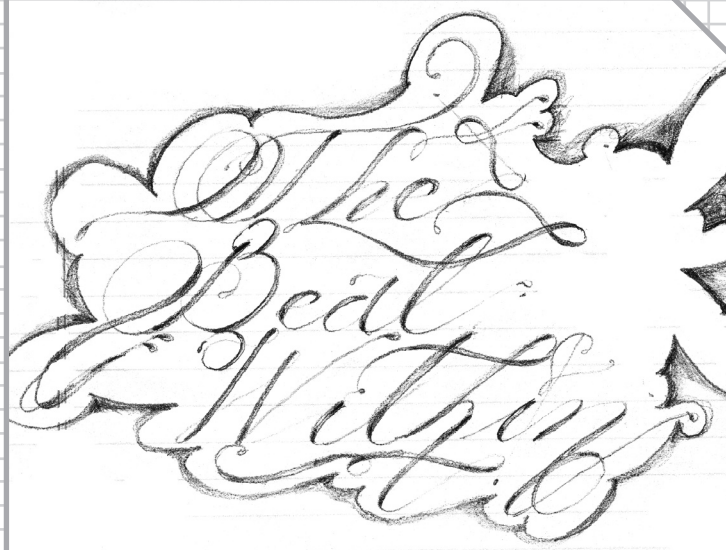
What Matters?

What matters to me the most is my family! For me it's always family first, no matter what. My goal is to see my family in wellbeing, and for them to be happy. I hate seeing my family struggling and having issues that stresses them out.

Now that I'm wrapped up, I feel even worse because I'm making my parents and family cry, stress and causing problems because of me. I hate the fact that I can't even do anything about it. I wish I could do something to try to help my parents with their problems. The only thing I could do right now is to do my time and get it over with and just start fresh when I get out.

-Yung Chuy, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you do what you say — do your time and start fresh — then you will be helping your family by giving them something to make them proud of. Of course, by doing that, you'll also be helping yourself.



I Admit I Have Regrets

It's funny, Last weekend I was looking at an old picture of me at my 14th birthday party. I looked so happy and full of joy. From the way I looked you would have assumed I didn't have not one worry in the world.

These days I walk around mugging. I've developed an anger problem. I don't get along with a lot of people. I've let my environment take control of me. I've let the media, rap videos, reality shows, etc. play a role on me and I am the outcome of all that.

I wish I knew then what I know now. I was so simple minded. But then I can't complain about spilled milk, I'm just happy I've come to realize that now, as opposed to in the long run, I admit I have regrets, but you can't worry about yesterday, you can just plan for tomorrow.

-Tay, Alameda

From The Beat: We see you in workshop each week, and though we know that in the past you've been caught up in anger and doing dirt - the look you have on your face is still a hopeful one: You can't go back to your days of innocence - but you can move forward towards your wisdom!

No More !!!

No more drama
 No more tears
 No more hurt
 No more lies
 No more pain
 No more being tore down
 No more being bullied
 No more fighting
 No more stealing
 No more hating
 No more killing
 No more blaming people
 No more being used
 No more being abused
 No more being raped
 No more worrying
 It's time to forget about '08
 Threw away the key to '08
 Bring in the key to open the gate to '09
 And forget about everything else and let yo' light shine.

-Miss Manditory, Alameda

From The Beat: Another great poem, to kick off the new years it's "Manditory" that you keep writing no matter what you do or where you go... so you can be sure to let YOUR light shine.

There for Me Under Any Condition

What matters to me is my family, my life, and my future, money and sex.

My mom is my best friend, she's there for me under any condition. My little bro is a pain in the butt, but he's a little bro. He's 11 and he like to play sports and eat and run the street. He rides around with his friends, until they grow up and turn into us.

I gotta have money to eat it, keep me motivated. If you don't got money you gonna die broke. If you don't got no money you don't got clothes, women, drugs.

I aint really never had no education I was too busy on the block, I'm trying to get my GED, I wanna change my life. I've been in here a couple times when I turn 18 I don't wanna go to the pen. I got choices. I know what to do, I don't want to do it but I know what to do.

If I go to the pen I won't get no women though, I need women to comfort me, so when I get that feeling I need healing. I want to have one kid, if I get a baby moma then I got a lock on her.

-Shawny, Solano

From The Beat: Well, in fairness to kids everywhere don't have a kid unless you can stay out of the pen, have a good relationship (not a "lock") with the mama, and be in their life doing all the things kids need their father to do. You have made a good choice, just deciding you want to change. Now you do what you can everyday to get your GED, and make choices that lead to freedom—and away from the pen. You know what to do!

Being on the Run

Hey this is Shaggy from Michoacan. I've been on the run for almost two years and a half. I was up in Mexico for that time. Seen so many types of killings down there. It was scary stuff but that is how life is. These fools called the Zetas be doing some crazy stuff you've ever seen, like throwing heads out of a bar to give most drug dealers or enemies warnings. Even slashing each other off a bet!

Well now I'm back and I'm about to get out and I'm going to kick it back again with the friends in the hood.

-Shaggy, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, for a second we got as shiver because it felt like we were down there with you - watching that crazy violence. Were you glad once you got back up here? Do you feel like your lifestyle in America is safer? Did being there change



Changing My Life Around

The first thing that matters to me is my family and my girlfriend. Another thing is my freedom. Really I don't care about my block no more. That don't matter to me no more. I am changing my life around, so the block don't matter to me no more than making fast money, and the one thing is making my mom proud.

Respect does matter because if you respect then you should get respect back. There can be freedom and respect at the same time, all depends what kind of respect you want. My family and my girlfriend matter to me because they always been with me on the good and bad times so that's the first thing that matters in my life.

That's all I got for today, I'll holla at you some other day. Later.

-Luis, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a mature, thoughtful sounding piece. It seems as if you have been doing some soul-searching at camp. Do you also have a new vision of what you want your future to look like? If so, step up and share it with The Beat and Beat readers!

It's Time To Go

The time comes for me to spread my wings and fly, To give life a chance and make use of Father Time. This is my last writing to The Beat and I do mean last, Because I'm putting this negativity and jail shhh in the past. Nobody can stop me, that's a guarantee I will make. Nothing is given to you, so the World and its knowledge I plan to take.

I'm rising fast and the finish line is in sight. I refuse to give up without finding happiness and so till the end I promise to fight.

I will try to find ways to ease my pain and learn to trust, But now I realize that to enjoy every end result, this struggling is a must.

Well this is it 'til next time, and I'm leaving finally. So look on the top, in the middle, the ninja in charge — And yeah, that's me, Mister Nobody.

With Love, Mister Nobody

-Mister Nobody, San Francisco

From The Beat: Making use of "Father Time" instead of doing time is what it's all about, so we want applaud your decision to put the past in the past and to set your feet on a new path. Your determination to succeed, to rise and move forward is commendable, but what is your plan for success? What will you do (or not do) when you get out that's different from the past?

Stunt in Heaven

Both were solid
 Both were hitters
 Going hard to the max
 Never could be quitters
 Stayed loyal to they soil
 And one thing's for sure
 When it came to being real
 They were a hundred percent pure
 From two different blocks
 And two different sexes
 But will approach problems similar
 When things get hectic
 Both of them gone
 And I'm still stuck in the daze
 Stunt in heaven to my sis Mellia and my real ninja Dave

-Young Money, Alameda

From The Beat: You've got a lot of pain behind that smile and a lot of talent behind that laugh. It's your talent and heart that will help you heal yourself from some of that pain. In the meantime, keep putting that heart out there to publish in The Beat.

Making My Way Out This Street Life

I'm making my way out this street life 'cause you only live once.

If this was a dream, you couldn't live twice.

Got a mother so nice, she did whatever she could to keep me out the streets,

from living a thug life. But my mind wasn't right.

I wonder why it's so right for me to be expressing this something that's so bright.

But my game is so tight.

It might callous my life.

Have I lived a good life?

I tell the Lord I didn't, the devil hating 'cause he knows he's my witness.

But I gotta get rich.

So I just pray to the Lord that he take my mama and my family out of this.

My mama says I'm a trip, she's mad at me again,

but God can't be mad 'cause everyone sins.

And I have lost a lot of homies but I ain't got no friends.

Since other people got millions

I think I'm gonna steal again.

But mama pray to the Lord that I don't steal again.

Ain't got a wife to sleep with but mama is holding my hand,

so when I wake up in jail, I feel her holding my hand.

Now I'm wishing I can give back everything I stole again.

'Cause Jesus died for three days and he rose again.

-Dirt Laden, Alameda

From The Beat: Dirt Laden, what would your mother say if she read this piece? In parts of the piece it sounds like you do want to leave, but in other parts it sounds like you just want to make sure your mother doesn't get hurt. You talk about wanting to get rich. Do you have the patience and determination to do it the legit way? It will take much longer, but you will always have the security of knowing you'll stay out of jail.

I refuse to give up without finding happiness and so till the end I promise to fight.

Yes, We Can

Yes I do believe that Barack Obama can make a change.

Yes I can make the promise come true in my life because I'm willing to change just like Obama is willing to help change.

What I hope those changes are,

no more war, no more racism, and to make the work economy better,

because of that everybody struggles.

Well I really can't do anything to change the stuff that I hope will be changed

but the way I could help is to get a job and make my life better.

But there is one way I could help and that is pray that everything will turn out for the best.

-Sadie, Alameda

From The Beat: Helping yourself is a great way to contribute to this large scale American change that Obama is working towards. Every positive word, every positive action is a step in the right direction. Nothing is too small.

Make Her Proud

Here it goes, me doing right. I need to start doing right because I'm about to be 18 and things are starting to get short for me. My mom says that I need to get my life together before she just says that she's through and puts her hands up.

I need to do right. Also I got a phone call the other day and I called my mom and she said that I'm doing hella shhh. So I asked her what I'm doing, and she said I'm snorting powder. But I really don't, so I got mad and hung up on her and after that I felt very bad and started crying so now I'm going to say sorry and live my life.

But anyways the whole thing is that my moms was going to leave me dead. But I love my moms so much, and I'm gonna show her that I can change and do right in life, and I'm gon' prove it to her and make her proud. (Love you mom and Donavan)

-Lil' Derik, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mom will never stop loving you. We see how mature and well behaved you are in the unit, and we see how heartfelt your writing is, and we KNOW you have it in you to make any change you want, if you set your mind to it. But don't try and do it alone. Have your probation officer hook you up with programs, jobs, the kinds of things that will help you do well. Peace. Make her proud!



We Can Change

I'm glad that Obama won to be elected to be our president because I know there could be changes.

Well first of all I really want to change my life. I'm in Alameda County juvenile hall and I'm tired of being here.

What matters to me more is that I'd rather be free and be with my family instead of just being in here. I'd rather have school yearbooks with me instead of a book with my records of jail.

In here every day I pray for my family cause I be worried not knowing how they are.

For 2009 when I come out I'm going to bring a new Juan. Not the same one that wouldn't listen and will always be messing up. I'm really tired of my past and I look at my future and want to change it and make it better for my own good and for my family, also others who look up to me.

Good job Beat, keep this on and things will change.

-Juan, Alameda

From The Beat: We're really glad that The Beat provides you with something valuable, that's why we come every week. But the Beat wouldn't exist without your writings. You are the experts, and you are the ones who can make change. We just do our best to give you the platform to do it.

The Beat matters to me too because it's like talking to someone, but instead of talking you're writing. I like writing more than I like talking.

Faith In Change

I do believe in the promise of change because like my counselor said, "A man with faith is also a man with courage," and you as a person must have faith and courage for that certain change it is you seek. I also believe I can make this promise of change in my life because I am not alone, for God is by my side, as well as others around me who seek changes in their lives as well.

What matters to me is my future because I already carry my family on my back and with me incarcerated, I've not only entrapped myself, but also my family into a situation of hardship and difficulty, that is hard to escape from. When I get out, it's up to me to turn my life around because I am the only boy out of my mother's womb. I come from a life of struggle where opportunity is in dire need, where being a criminal or a drug dealer is looked upon as remedy for the youth.

Now I'm 18 and I finally understand that saying, "Knowledge is Power: that power comes from what you do with that knowledge. The great Malcolm X said, "there's nothing wrong with being a criminal, but remaining one is the problem." So it's up to me to not remain a criminal for my future is at stake. A writer once said, "How we spend our days is how we spend our lives." And I don't want to spend my life locked up forever. Do you?

-Satuala, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your thoughts, and the important words of these other wise men. You say it's the future that's important now— so the Beat would like to know, what are your plans for that future? We can definitely see you going to college and pursuing a life that is worthy of your intellect, but what is it you want?

A Happy Belated Christmas

I just want to say merry Christmas to first my family, since I'ma be locked up in here on Christmas and on new years. I even spent Thanksgiving in here too. I feel bad about being in here, but then again I have time to think about what I did and what I'ma do when I get out. So far I have thought about what I'ma do to change my life for me, my family/friends, and my future. I have plenty more time to think about what I wanna do before I get to go home.

Some people choose money over their family and some people choose family over money. It look like I made the wrong choice. If I would've chose my family then I would not be in here. My family is what really matters to me. They still showed me love and also believed in me when I told them that I was going to change, especially my mother. She came here to visit me and even showed up to my court date. I never thought that she would still be by my side after what I have done!

The Beat matters to me too because it's like talking to someone, but instead of talking you're writing. I like writing more than I like talking. So, I just want to say thanks for letting me share my story, thoughts, and feelings.

-Cobbra, Alameda

From The Beat: We're really happy that The Beat allows you to get your thoughts out, especially if you have trouble saying them out loud. If you need to get your thoughts out, in general, in life, you don't have to wait for us. Start a journal, even once you get out, and get your thoughts out any way you can.

Ain't Tryin' To Be Here No More

What's good, this is yo' boy Nano from Camp Sweeney. Well I'm just right here. Chilling in camp, kicking back trying to do good so I could be out in February. I hope I do 'cause I ain't tryin' to be here no more. This shhh is boring and it's just wasting time!

Right now I'm working on my GED. I hope I pass it. So when I get out I could go work at Cornerstone.

I'm still with my girl! You know like every relationship, we broke up and got together the next day! But she's doing good and she's about to go to college, and we are planning on living together when I get out then later comes the babies! LOL! But first I got to get my life straight, so I could give my baby whatever she needs and wants.

-Nano

From The Beat: Congratulations on all your recent successes. If you do pass your GED, and start on a potential career as an architect, then maybe it will turn out that this time you spent in camp wasn't that much of a waste of time after all?

Mom and Rod

I want to recognize my momma and my stepdad -Rod - for being the best in my life. I love them with all my heart and don't know what I would do without them. I wanna recognize them for putting up with my bad actions. I chose them to write about because I love them and they deserve to be recognized. Mom I want to thank you for being the best mom. You could ever ask for. I want to thank my stepdad for being there when he could be taking care of me even though I walked all over him.

I really do care about you guys, mom I also want to recognize you for the best cooking a kid could get. I want to recognize the great technology from my stepdad and all the wisdom I love you all and I want to recognize your good things and tell you I love you.

-Haley

From The Beat: Knowing that you love them will make both Rod and your mom happy. But what would make them even more happier would be if they know you love YOURSELF. What are some things you can do that are a part of truly loving yourself?

Missing Too Much Out There

What's up this is yo' boy Kash Money from Oakland ... I'm still here Camp Sweeney going for for months and I already had my middle court and they say that I'm doing good and to keep it up, so I can get out about late February or in the beginning of March.

I'm really trying to get the hell out of this place because I'm missing too much out there But probably I would have been dead by now because of the things that I have in my reputation. But at the same time I already feel comfortable in here, 'cause I been here too long, but I would rather do my time at the hall, and the only reason why I'm still here in camp is 'cause we get home passes.

Also I'm hella happy because on this Saturday I met a pretty ass female named Jackie and she's the prettiest female I ever met. She looks like the one for me, and I was talking to her and she said she used to like me, and I got hella mad 'cause I didn't know If I did I would got at her. I'm finna kick it with her this weekend. Damn she hella pretty, I'm a win her heart - watch.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot waiting for you out there... good things (a girl) and bad things too (drama). How are you going to take the good without getting caught up in the bad? Have you got a real plan of things you can do with your time BESIDES the messed up stuff that got you in jail? We hope so, because jail is the last place we'd want you feeling "comfortable".

Chucho's Back

What's up? It's Chucho, and I am back at camp! This is my third week here. I am juiced that I am back. I went home on Christmas and New Years I kicked it with my family. I am good, and I was with them on the holidays, I'ma try not to run, 'cause I don't want to, I wanna finish this to put it all behind me.

When I am done, I ain't going to do no hot shhh.

-Chucho

From The Beat: We're glad you are back too - because we know how much talent and potential you have, and we were worried to think of you on the run without a chance of getting back on track. Welcome back to our pages!

The Story

This is the story

There is no need to worry

This is where it all begins

This is a story that never ends

I was raised by my granny

She had so many problems too many

I was raised a sweet young girl

Now I wonder what happened to the world

Now I am 15 years old

Tryin' to make it, tryin' to be bold

Tryin' to do what I'm told

Sorry but this story's sold

Now I'm sittin' up in Juvenile Hall

In my cell lookin' at these walls

I'm still wondering why I'm still here

Sometimes I wonder Oh Man, Oh Dear

How did I come to be in the place

I feel like everything I've done is a waste

Like I said this is where it all begins

This is the story that will never ever end.

-Karra Bear

From The Beat: Great poem, Karra! Who will write this story? Who will decide its next chapters? You can't control what happens to you, but can you control how you react to what happens, what you do with the raw materials of your life? And what direction do you want to take your story in?

With Much Respect

You was a solid soldier hittin' corners in the AC an' no grapes in your pocket, straight champagne sacks always off hennessy without any chaser and the motivation for your kids made you get the paper as my anger arises and tears in mom's eyes makes me grip the cold steel an' unleash forget a sucka, I rather let it rain 'cause maybe it will help wash this pain away 'cause your soul lives with us reminisce on a G born and raised in the city for the last years you lived I spent behind bars incarcerated now I'm pissed 'cause your life's gone no doubt I still wake up with cold sweats at about the hour I was told about your death I couldn't take it, I couldn't believe it, man, I just wept rest in peace, with much respect

RIP china (7/4/84-3/25/06)

There's not a day goes by that I don't picture your face. We miss you.

-Lil'Savage

From The Beat: Simply, is the life of a G worth this pain? How does the pain get washed away by creating more kinds of pain? It doesn't seem to work that way, in the end, does it? We wish you well and wish you safety.

Still In My Memory

Nothing's never changed except that there's new thugs here
for the homie chino, ain't nothin' but love here
you gone but not forgotten an' your presence is surely missed
you in a better place where greed, hate and jealousy don't exist
this a tribute to you homie since we had no chance for last words
you crossed over from this life to the life for we yearn
if you lookin' down I hope you proud that we represent you right
you was a solidier by the way you lived your life
no more pain no more worries
clashin' in with your journeys
we gonna hold your name up high 'cause ain't no question that you worthy
an we never would have known that you leave us all of sudden
but your memory lives on 'cause you didn't die for nothing
I was passin' by the block and you crossed my mind
still got your number in my cell
expectin' you to pick up line
hello
let's take a moment to pray for chino
this moment of silence is dedicated to you
RIP chino (7/4/84 to 3/25/06). We miss you.
Always in our hearts.

- Lil' Savage

From The Beat: You do such a great job of expressing your loss. We are very sorry, lil savage.

Time For Wise Decisions

Yes, I can. I can do whatever I want. I can do a lot.

I can get a job when I get out. I could get my diploma and make my mama proud, and get my head on straight and on the right path. That's what I can do. What matters to me is God and my family and loved ones that's what matters to me. And gettin' out of jail, going to school and makin' a better life for myself.

I was 16 in '08 and I wasn't makin' wise decisions my first time, comin' to jail and that was a dumb decision. My first time coming to jail was a dumb decision, and I know it was, but I told myself that I wasn't coming back. But I did, and I'm mad I did, but I know it wasn't my fault... but I think maybe God put me in here for a reason, because my friend got shot and a lot has been happening.

But I been thinking this time I promise myself I'm not coming back.

-Lil' Pooda

From The Beat: Congratulations on making that first step. The Beat has confidence that if you believe in yourself and keep up the positive path, you could have the '09 of your dreams. What will be your second step?

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

In 2009 I done some stupid things and some smart things, and in 2009, I know not to do the same things over again. I feel a lot wiser than I was earlier this year. I got plans to be successful for the year coming.

So now I'm sayin' goodbye to the old year and welcoming the new year.

-Dre

From The Beat: Out with the old, in with the new - so tell us some of your plans for this year, and how you plan on acting on your new wisdom!

Screw Your Power Trip!

1. "In the midst of life we are death. Of whom may we seek for succor?" -An Enlightened Man
This is the age old question: Is there a higher power?
2. "I haven't slept since I woke up and found out my whole life is a lie." -Slipknot.
When people find out they've been lied to, that puts a lot of stress on them.
3. "For a wounded man shall say to his assailant 'If I live, I will kill you. If I die, you are forgiven.' Such is the rule of honor."
People don't necessarily need other people to have their own laws and morals. The way I see it, as long as the law only concerns themselves or the way they act towards other people in order to live alongside them.
A lot of people judge me and don't know a thing about me. Well all you need to know is, I'm proud to be an infidel!"

-Josh

From The Beat: It sounds as if there are a lot of things you DO believe in, even if you don't believe in religion. You believe in honor, you believe in questioning, you believe in knowledge, and you believe in paying attention to what people need, and how they suffer. Here's a quote for you "It doesn't matter what you believe in, so long as you believe!" We'll tell you where that came from next time we see you!

Yes We Can

Man this Lil' P from Oakland. I'm glad we have a black president. I hear gas prices went down. That means I'm a load up that 5.0 and do the fool. When I get out I'm mobbin that g thang. Man cause I ain't never cashing \$4 for 2 gallons. Profit means money.

-Lil P

From The Beat: Gas went down it's true, and a lot more has happened too. What else do you plan to do when you are released?

To My Sister, Tanika

What can I say to you, other than that I lied to you and told you that I wasn't coming back to jail, and I did?

Sis I miss you, so much I think of you 24-7. I don't know what to do. If I had the power to just hear your precious voice, I would give up my life for that. I wish I could just hear your voice just one more time. I wish I could switch places with you. I love you so much, and I wish...

-Clayton

From The Beat: The best thing you can do for Tanika is to thrive in her name. Just last week, The Beat met a man whose son was shot to death in Oakland. Instead of seeking revenge, the man started a scholarship fund in his son's name, and now about ten young people are getting job training because of him. What would Tanika have liked for you to name after her?

A Place For Me: Half Moon Bay

A place for me to go when I need a quiet and a peaceful time is Half Moon Bay. Whenever I get annoyed by people and I need some time to think about everything in life, I just go to Half Moon Bay by myself and chill and smoke a blunt and eat my food, walk around and meet people and have a good enjoyable time. The air is so fresh that every breath you take feels so good and refreshing. If your mind is dehydrated and the place to go is to make it hydrated is half moon bay.

-Farhad

From The Beat: We agree that the air and the beach are great. There's something about that fresh ocean breeze that lightens the soul. We had to cut part of this piece 'cause we don't advocate drug use in The Beat, and plus, in this life if it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing sober. Still - we hope you get an ocean view soon. You deserve it.

Mama Tried

I'm going crazy an' lately I've been snappin' it's time for some action, them hollow tips crackin' got demons in my head and screws that can't be fixed so I get blazed and drunk off a fifth just to ease my pain so I don't get rotten thoughts an' mamma I apologize for all of these years for being incarcerated and causin' you tears I know it can't change the fact for the wrong that I did daddy been locked up twelve years so I was no ordinary kid I was told that I'll be gang-banging since I left your womb that was eighteen years ago see how these predictions come true

-Lil' Savage

From The Beat: We know that your court date did not end the way you would have liked and this piece does seem like a prediction. We know your talents, though, with words and with thought, and believe that you can be other things than a gang-banger. Courage.

San Francisco Brings Me Peace.

San Francisco brings me peace. I like going to Frisco because I like walking around and just minding my own business. When I'm in Frisco I can do whatever I want and walk wherever I want.

I also like walking around looking at people and watching them do their things. I like going to Pier 39 to look at the people doing the business, the run and looking at all types of people

-Jerome

From The Beat: Great description, Jerome...Does putting yourself in a different world also put you in a different mindset? This piece is such a good start—you described Frisco, now tell us about some other places you'd want to go to if you could: Italy? Africa? Hawaii? Mexico?

Talk Is Cheap

Riding down the block I called it the fast life/looking for these ninjas about to be you last night/ about to put they lights out/rode down yo block about to put you to sleep/ninjas thought life is sweet/but they didn't know they were about to sleep/talked all that s*** cause talk is cheap.

-Young One

From The Beat: It's a good thing all this is in the past. We think you're better off with the life that you want now, and wish you all the luck in making that happen.

What Matters

What matters to me is all listed on that paper but most importantly is my family because I know for a fact they on my side all the way. Then my block because it is where I live at, kinda like my playground. Then I like making my mom proud but I like money too, so I do both but I just don't tell my mom what I'm doing because it will get her mad and sad that is why I'm in here now.

My freedom is more important than respect because I don't have to prove myself to nobody because I know what I'm capable of doing. I'll only do something if I want to, not because someone tells me to.

The three things that matter most to me are my family, money and the block.

-Aleyandro

From The Beat: Sometimes our priorities in life conflict with each other (which it sounds like might be going on between family and money/block priorities). Are there things you can do to help bring all your priorities in line with each other? Is there a way to get money in a way that will also make your family proud?

What I'm Going Through Here

My name is Jose, let's see.

Another day, another day, another hour, stuck in the same place doing the same thing. Same room, same toilet, basically same thing different, the only thing different about today was breakfast, court, lunch and dinner. And that wasn't that good but that's how jail is.

This is my first time here and I feel all stressed out because I usually be with my mom or work. I miss them so much that every single time I think about my family I worry about whether my family is there safe and eating. I worry about my court.

I was also sorry about one important thing and that's my girl and little baby that's coming up, 'cause I want my little baby to love me, and I want to be next to my baby when he or she gets born. And as soon as I get out I want to walk up and go to school, so I could learn what's good with my life.

I don't have to come back to this bad place again, I would like to be better with my family so they could be proud of me, 'cause I don't want my little sisters and brothers to end up like me when I'm gone, or when they grow up. I just want them to have a good and strong life while I'm here on earth right now, and I want to be a bigger person and work for my family and baby and then get married.

I want to show people the better path and not the path I'm going through right now.

-Jose

From The Beat: We hope you keep this piece and memorize each word of it, because if you keep it close to your heart these words and feelings can be your guide in the future, helping you stay on that better path.

Money isn't Everything, Crime doesn't Pay

One year old, one year wiser I realized now that money isn't everything and I know that crime doesn't pay. At first I thought money was my everything but now I value a lot more than money I value my education, my freedom, and of course my family.

I'm not just saying this because it sounds good just because I'm in jail, I'm saying it because this is what I learned. I've been locked up for only a month and a half and I learned a lot about myself and a lot about the world. I feel like I'm a little more wiser.

-Get Money

From The Beat: You're making sense. Maybe you could change your name to "Get Free."

It's Not Funny

It's a pocket full of reasons that I don't find things amusing, especially when I'm in the hall and people think everything is funny or it's playtime all the time that ain't how me and my ninjas rock.

We are taught life is more serious than people take, it because a lot of things can happen by playin' so I stay serious at all times, not speaking for anybody else. It's cool to laugh and express your feelings but it's not always amusing when someone thinks it is. That's all I got for this because I thought it was a good question...So if I do make this to The Beat book, I hope I understand what I mean by it's not amusing time all the time.

-Jb

From The Beat: Thanks for these insights. You're right, there are a lot of times when people will laugh when they are talking about something that isn't funny, like when we laugh at other people's suffering, or even our own. Like you said "A lot of things can happen by playin'."

If I Wasn't

Verse 1:

If never came back, got sentenced 25 to life
would you still love me, would you even write
if you didn't, it's alright, 'cause I wouldn't shed a tear
an' the man up above is my only fear
if I died today would you pour out hennessy
would you grieve over my death, would you ride for me
would you drift on a memory later down the road
daddy was a rider, would you let my kids know
an' if you do that's for sure 'cause for you I'll do the same
an' if I wasn't high I probably blow out my brains
'cause all of this bullshhh that's up in this game
most of the real is gone so we surrounded by fake
we were surrounded by hate, jealousy and greed
'cause most people now days will do anything for green
if it got the right amount of zeros they'll most likely do it
but with me an' the crew, it's old school influence.

Chorus, repeat 2x:

If I wasn't in a gang would you love me the same
if I wasn't high I'll probably blow out my brains
listen to me, hear tears, listen to my pain an' anger
this is the blues of a hardcore 'ster

Verse 2:

If I wasn't in a gang, would you love me the same
and if I got a nine-to-five would you look at me strange
would I ever change, most likely not
I'm in it until the day my casket drops
I hope this goes as plans, it's been a couple months I've
been plottin'
seventeen hot tracks 'cause my lyrics ain't no stoppin'
'cause most think my hits go hard so I gotta pursue
get my name out an' rep for my folks too
'cause if the future's askin', I ain't goin' in the casket

-Lil' Savage

From The Beat: We cut the last parts of this song. It seemed unfinished anyway, stopped mid-word. We like ending with the determination to stay out of the casket through hot tracks and lyrics. And we needed to cut out the parts about activities that wouldn't keep you safe at all. The tone of the last verse, though, had an impressive intensity. We are at times impressed with the writing, and other times troubled by your views.

A Pocket Full of Things

There are a lot of things that matter, a pocket full of things, like my life, my money, my freedom out of the hall is rockin' them suckas and bouncin' on 5.0. with a quick high speed, all the other things is really irrelevant though.

-Jb

From The Beat: We hope that when you get out you won't HAVE to bounce on 5.0. We hope you get out and find a way to finish school, earn a legit living, and stay away from neighborhood beat, because the thing that matters most is your life, and not losing it!

My Story is An Encouragement Tool

In ten years I will be in California, and I will be helping the youth. I also plan on coming back to Juvenile Hall and I will be helping the youth get their lives together and I will share my story as an encouragement tool.

-X

From The Beat: That's good to hear, "X"! How are you going to achieve these goals? What steps will you need to take to get to the point you are describing?

Took A Break

I took a break to think to myself, about all I was going through, all the unnecessary stress I caused for myself and my family. Everything I thought was so important started to seem stupid.

I was so busy trying to help everybody else that when I needed help no one was there for me. The only person that helped me was my dad, which was the person I hurt the most. When I finally took a break a noticed I need to shape up.

My mother is very sick and I want her to see me do well before she passes. Life is hard, but you don't need to make it harder. Try your best to be happy and your family will be proud.

-Lizzie

From The Beat: Sounds like you have parents who really care about you and want the best for you. To those readers who aren't so lucky, we want you to know that what Lizzie wrote is what we want for you - to try your best to be genuinely happy in life.

Woulda Shoulda Coulda

I regret a lot of things. The main thing I regret right now is the day I got caught up. There was a whole lot of things I could have done that day.

If I would have stayed at home or gone to school that day I wouldn't be here. But you know, woulda shoulda coulda. That's what everybody says when they regret things. It's hard to not do things we regret because things happen and sometimes you can't do nothing about it. So you just gotta deal with it.

-Lil' Rikki

From The Beat: Right, you can't control your past but you can control your future, and even to a certain degree, your present. What are some things you know for sure you won't be doing in the first place?

These Nothing Hood Dudes

My love life has been very cold. All the dudes I have been dating really nothing guys. The guys that I be thinking love me and those be disrespectful guys and all my life I have not had no father figure, my daddy got locked up at the age of 11 years old and ever since then I been looking for love in all the wrong places, and that's not been the thing for me. I can't tell myself that's not the man who can treat you right.

I am very pretty, with a good big heart, and I don't need a dude, I want a dude to share my world with me. Because when you have dude that's loving you, you feel really good inside and you're on top of the world. But when real love and the man is real then you can say I found the right man of my life.

-Makayla

From The Beat: The more you do for yourself, the better class of man you'll attract. The best men look for strong and happy women. And you deserve a good man, right? So what are you doing, and what can you do, to keep yourself strong and happy?

We Do Have A Chance

Man, what's good, it's Lil' Marcus, man it's crazy, I got a baby, and my lil' ninjas be locked down right now. Man I'm just missin' all my potnas, I just wish we can have a chance to go back to school but then again we do have a chance, but to all my ninjas that are locked down, I love you all and miss you.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: Do you feel differently about life when you are locked up? School, the future, fatherhood? What are you going to do with your second chance?

What Matters Deep Down Inside

To be honest, when I'm on that corner it may seem like money is the only thing I think about, but deep down inside I really care for my mom. It may be times when I don't show it but that's not at all the case.

My mom didn't raise me that way but it's the decision I chose to make. I now realize I'm not only hurtin' myself, I'm hurtin' my family too! You don't realize what you have until it's taken away from you, so take this situation you in now, and learn from it.

-Lil' Fred

From The Beat: "Don't it always seem to go, you don't know what you've got till it's gone" It's part of human nature that we don't always know how to follow what we care for deep down until we are about to lose it. Do you think you have started making different decisions, now that you are learning from a new situation?

One Year Older One Year Wiser.

I know I want do the things I did to get in here and what ever I do I wont get caught because I been in here almost a year and jail has made me wiser.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: Sometimes even though we want to do things, we don't—because we don't want the consequences!! If you don't like jail don't do illegal things! We had to edit your song, it was rated a little R and we think it might be best between you and her...

Messed Up

What's up this Goofy, man this year was messed up because this year I got locked up the first time and they messed me up.

-Goofy

From The Beat: We're sorry you're locked up, and understand it's no fun—and think you must've done something to get there right? You got to get your mind and your life right. It's not up to anybody but you.

She Means So Much To Me

What's good, this is Lil' Knuckles from Livermore. Well today I wanted to talk about my lady Ana Yvette (Banana). Well I love my lady hella much, and since I'm up here, at camp she is one person that makes my home passes so great. And also my life. I got her name tatted and I want to thank her for getting my name tatted. On January 16 2009 will be our second year anniversary. Her birthday is March 18, and I'm supposed to be getting released in March. I'm going to be hella mad if I don't get released before her birthday. I get to go on a home pass for our anniversary so that's cool. This weekend that just passed we went to TGI Fridays, the restaurant. The food went and so did my strawberry lemonade.

After that she dropped me off here. I love my female so much, she does whatever for me, I appreciate it so much, but sometimes when I go and get drunk with my homies she tells me not to, because she thinks that I'm going to do something wrong when I don't. I go anyways and I always let her know I don't do nothing stupid and I'm sorry but I keep drinking. I'm just going to start taking her places with me. I've already started so it's good. She means so much to me, and I don't ever want to be without her. Everyone knows I'm with her, and my family loves her as their own daughter.

-Lil' Knuckles

From The Beat: You have one of the greatest gifts a person can speak of — you have someone's true love. You are also man enough to write about that love with pride. That's an even greater gift. Maybe it's time to really look at the drinking. It seems like drinking gets in between you and the things you most want in the world. Is this true?

I Got Dreams

There is a place for me in this world farther than anyone has ever been than anyone can ever go, a place that is meant just for me.

I don't care what other people think about me or what other people do, so whatever negativity towards me was be flipped as a way to use as a boost to succeed. I got bigger dreams that anybody in the world could ever dream.

-Dada

From The Beat: Man, this could be the beginning of a terrific piece — we love the determination you show. And now tell us — what are some of these dreams? Will you share them with The Beat: We hope so.

Getting My Life Straight

I'm going to get my life straight when I get out. I'm not going to be one of those prisoners in prison 40,50 years old trying to get they life straight when they have a life sentence, that's too late.

I'm 16 trying to get my life straight, those prisoners in prison could have got their life straight a long time ago. Me, I'm making a change now. I'm going to get out and stay out and do any program they throw at me so I can be successful in the future so I don't be serving anyone's prison sentences.

What matters to me is my family. If anything ever happens to them and I know the person who did it I'm gone ride. My closest friend I'm gone ride. Some people say wrong, I say right because say he did something and you get shot, that's not me but if he's right I'm gone ride with or without the banga some for my family.

-Krazy Dre

From The Beat: Making positive changes in life can be done at any point, but the younger you are, the easier it is to do. Making changes now is a lot easier than it would be 20 years from now. What does that change look like though? What programs will you go to? Figuring these details out will get you closer to your goals.

My Mom Cares

My mom is proud of no matter what I do because she has a lot of faith in me and she knows I will have a great life. My mom is a very good mom and she believes in me. She just don't like when I come to jail or be on the street. When I was growing up it was easy because my dad was a drug dealer and he could provide for us.

-Daddy M

From The Beat: Does she feel confident of your great life even when you are locked up in jail? Clearly she loves you dearly—but what actions could you take that you think would make her really proud of you?

What Matters

Of course my freedom means a lot to me even though I am stuck in the juvenile detention system for the next couple of months.

Hopefully when I get out I still have enough time to finish high school and get my diploma. My life means a lot to me. I think it means too much to me that's why all of these bad things keep happening to me.

I don't know how my future is going to go but I pray to God I have my stuff together and my focus the way it's supposed to be. I am a smart person with a lot of thoughts and a lot of problems with a huge future ahead, all I ask is for God to guide me the way life is supposed to be.

-Brittany

From The Beat: You make a very interesting statement about how you think you get yourself into trouble because you care too much about your life. We think this is a very common feeling — can you explain to The Beat next time what this means to you?

Change

Hi my name is John I'm not having a good day but other than that I'm supposed to be going home soon. I've been here for a week I think change is good. I've been changed. I just made a mistake and came here. But I do believe change is good I will accomplish it by doing right things and not bad things to get myself in here but I will never come in here.

-John

From The Beat: We wish you luck and hope we never see you here again!

What Matters To Me

What matters to me the most is my money, because money makes the world go around. And making money matter more to me than making my mom proud cause my mom's a crack head.

And what else matters is my freedom because when you in the hall you can't make no kind of money and it makes me angry being in a hot ass room all day.

What else matters is my block cause when it's a problem I ain't got no family so the streets is my closest homies. What matters to me is getting this dough 'cause I ain't gonna window shop while I go to the store.

What else matters is my block, my set. My mother been a crack head since I was a baby out her womb, now I'm a cold hearted soldier 'till I lay in my death tomb. I ride with my ninjas in my click.

-Josh

From The Beat: From what you write, it seems that the two most important things to you are making fast money and being free. Are these things that can coexist? If the way you're making money is illegal, it will keep bringing you back to the hall costing you your freedom. You might need to prioritize what you're willing, or not willing, to give up.

Yes I Can

I'm in the hall, it feels like nothin' matters no mo'
Can't see my baby mama
Can't see my potnas or my folks
I'll be back, at least I know that
I'm a young black man
Don't trust that
Man it's real in Oakland
That's my land
Can't wait till I get out now yes I can.

-Jb

From The Beat: When you say "I'll be back" do you mean back out with your family? Or do you mean back in the hall? This poem makes it seem like your future could go in either direction... which one do you think it will be?

Stay Put!

Hey Beat, this your boy Michael from Hayward. I'm not feeling today's topics so let me say I'm back as you can read for burglary. I ran from my group home which I regret doing.

To all you ninjas out there don't run, stay there, pimp that shhh. I ran from all six of my group homes but my next one I'm going to pimp that shhh so I can go home with my family and my son. I had a hard life so what I'm trying to say is stay at your group home, well I'm out.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Running from group homes is something we hear all the time. We hope some of you readers listen to this advice - the best way to get out of the system is to finish your program. Running will just keep you in.

Keep My Head up Regardless

What's up with the Beat? What matters to me is my life, my loved ones and my freedom. I regret the day I took a deal that they offered me. I think I would have been better off going to trial because maybe I could of won and be out right now.

I regret that I didn't think before I acted that day I got took down. Now I'm stuck in Alameda waiting to get transferred...but it ain't no time to feel sorry for myself. I'ma keep my head up regardless.

-Lano

From The Beat: We appreciate that despite your regrets you are able to keep your head up and have a good attitude. Who knows what might have been? We can't change that now, but you still have a future ahead of you. You have your loved ones, you have your life. Build your skills and take time to get to know yourself and what you want for your future. Good luck.

Huggin' The Block

A lil' ninja on his own man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja stayin' strong man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja sellin' zones man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja strapped with chrome man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja on 24's man,
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja off that dro' man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that rep his set man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja from them streets man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja tryna eat man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that pack heat man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja who attract beef man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja flippin' whips man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja stackin' chips man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja flippin' bricks man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that don't trip man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that shoot dice man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that rock ice man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that rock ice man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja that rock ice man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja ain't nothin' nice man
Huggin' the block
A lil' ninja you don't get twice man
Huggin' the block
We all we got

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: A lil' ninja stress on his mind man/Huggin' the block A lil' ninja got death on his mind man/Huggin' the block/A little ninja lost too many boys man/Huggin' the block/A lil' ninja missed childhood joys man/Huggin' the block/A lil' ninja with his heart on fire, man/Huggin' the block/A lil' ninja need to dream higher/Huggin' the block...and the block don't hug back.

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

Going into the year 2008, I thought I was untouchable. I had just had a great year before and started doing a lot of crazy shhh. I thought I would get away with it, but karma's a bummer. I ended up losing everything. Getting locked up more than once. And looking back on it, it was all for nothing.

So 2009 is gonna be a new year for me. No more getting locked up and all the other things I was doing. I've learned it just isn't worth it, I've spent too much of my life either locked up or on probation, and in 2009, it's all gonna change. What don't kill me can only make me stronger, and if it wasn't for the years before I wouldn't be who I am today.

-J

From The Beat: The great thing about a new year is that even though it's just another day, it symbolizes so much more for lots of people. The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to rethink things, to make changes. The hard part of a resolution is sticking to it past January - keep it in your head, don't let it fall away that quickly.

What Matters?

My family means so much to me, they is all I got, they make me wiser. The true of my life is my mama she taught me so much, she gave me the ropes to stay out of trouble I just did not listen I did what I wanted to do but I'm gone bounce back fast for my ninjas and my family.

-Julius

From The Beat: Have you apologized to her for not listening? Maybe you could talk to her about knowing that you should have listened and appreciating what she has taught you—and she will know she should keep talking. Take your next chance and make the most of it.

Heck with Christmas

To me Christmas don't mean s*** to me because every year I'm away from my family and my mother hasn't been there since I was 11 years old.

-Lil Miami

From The Beat: That sounds hard. As you get older maybe you can build a family and make Christmas how you always wished it could be.

My Regrets, My Hopes

If I could change something from the last three years it be something that happen to someone... and something I did. But I can't change nothing so I just live my life the best I can.

What I hope to do is have six kids and move to Mexico buy a house out there, and take care of my family.

-Frank

From The Beat: You're wise - we can't change our past actions, but so long as there is hope inside us we can plan for a better future. How are you going to turn this hope you have into a plan so you can make it come true?

A Place For Me Is My Home

A place for me is my home. I hate to be in Juvy. I can't do shhh in here, I miss my family, and I haven't seen my family in 7 months. I want to go home and chill with my family.

A place for me is school, college. I would want to feel the sensation of being in the college campus again.

-Sad Boy

From The Beat: We hope you get that feeling. Just imagine 20 years from now, telling your children about how good it felt when you got that college degree!

Mad

I'm mad cause I'm not going to be with the family for Christmas and that s*** makes me hella mad and I miss my family. I wish I can go home for Christmas. I miss just being with my brother and sister and moms and pops.

-Mikey

From The Beat: Well, it's a new year, how about deciding you'll be home next December? We hope you were alright, and think you may have moved units. Keep writing. Make some new plans for this year, to be free in your life.

In Here I Feel Dumb

What matters to me? Life. And more importantly my life. I'm very family oriented and depend on no one but myself to get what I want. I will be 18 in 13 days

But it seems like the system has put a big halt on me doing me.

I'm a 4.0 student, but in here I feel dumb. I'm supposed to be getting a car, my own place, and getting ready for higher education, but here I am stuck in jail.

-Ashley

From The Beat: What does "me doing me" mean to you? Because all the things you describe, good grades, plans for higher education, caring about your family - aren't these all things you will be able to reach out for very soon? What are some of the other things that feel like they've been halted long term?

RIP Vern

What's good lil' cousin how you doin' ? Man I been missin' you. When my sister called me and told me that one of my cousin's was dead I kept calling Derrick. He wouldn't answer the phone so I thought it was him then, my moms came in the room cryin' talkin' 'bout you got shot. I didn't believe her. We went to the house and I cried my eyes out. But when Derrick told me it was true, I just want you to know I would give my last breath to hear you talk. Love you.

-DeeJay

From The Beat: Thank you for this heartfelt and moving testimony to your love for your friend. Are there other loved ones you've lost? How do you cope with grief in general? Do you cry? Get angry? Stress? Talk to someone about it? Write a memorial?

My Family

My family is what matters. They are the most important thing in my life. I wouldn't be anything in my life. They mean my life, my world, my universe. They are me and I am them.

-Clarence

From The Beat: Get yourself right then so you can spend your life with them. You'll love building a family of your own too. Don't forget what matters, figure out a way to remember every day, so you don't forget when faced with choices that could get you locked up again.

Back in the County

Back in these bootsy county clothes. Lookin' like the rest of the county ninjas back look at the same four walls, back wearin' these other ninja's draws.

I'm back now, give me my applause If you don't care, that's why you gon' be wearin' my draws.

-Jamon

From The Beat: You need to get out these gray cold halls, get back home wear yo' own draws/but if you want to slip out their claws/learn their rules and don't break their laws!

Change

Who can help us change wait most of all who can help me change? I want to but what if my enemies still want to kill me. I need to change but these streets keep calling my name. I have to change but I love my block fam.

-Child Of God

From The Beat: Well we've seen others say that the streets may call but you don't have to answer. You have to decide what you do want to answer, what your own self calls you for...You can love your block fam, and not have to die or go to the pen for them...Listen to yourself, write, read, try to figure out who you are away from the block...maybe that will lead you somewhere else.

Staying Out of Trouble

Having a new President is awesome I never thought that we would be a black president I couldn't believe it. Staying out of trouble is what matters most to me because it seems like I can't stay out of it. As I get older I change and get smarter.

-Marvis

From The Beat: Well we elected this president, and that's a big change—so maybe that means it's possible for you to change too. After all you are getting older and smarter. Maybe you could focus on what you are interested in instead of just staying out of trouble.

No Way

I went to court and they try to give me a deal/ I looked at my like are you for real/ I ain't taken no deal hell naw no way/ I'm taken it to trial I'm innocent all the way.

-Lil' Rolo

From The Beat: We wish you luck Rolo, we see you working on yourself and really thinking about your life. We think you can get it right...

My Second Chance

This is my second chance and I'm taking advantage of it because I realize that the road I'm going down is not the right path and if I keep going I'm gonna end up dead or in jail for the rest of my life. I will always be a neighborhood goon, but I can't let that be an excuse for why I do the things I do.

I have the freedom of choice I can be whatever I want to be, in spite of the environment I live in, in spite of the school I go to, and in spite of the choices my parents made. I'm keeping it one-hundred. I been thinking about the present and also my father and that's something I lacked before I came to the hall. I'm thinking about going to UTI after I graduation high school so I can work at Dealerships and make good money, So to all ya'll reading this, think about your future.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: We are glad to see that you are taking your second chance very seriously. You do have choice—and you will need a lot of patience, hard work and determination as well. We think you are up to the challenge!

Change

Change is possible I know because we have a black President. I know change is possible because most of the people that got out of prison changed their life around, a lot of my uncle's have been in and out of prison most of them have changed their ways but a couple are still at it! That's how I know change is possible.

-Big Body

From The Beat: You have good examples to believe in change when you may hit moments when you wonder if you really can do it. You can.

Wasted Time

I wasted two months waiting for my family. First I was going to go to Texas, but when it was time to go, my aunt did not want me to go over there no more. Then the second time I could have gone to my aunt's house in Hayward and she agreed to let me come. But when it was time to get the paperwork started for me to go there, she was saying to my PO that it's not a good idea to go no more.

Well basically it's telling me that my family thinks I'm not going to live up to what I say, when I say I'm going to do right. Nobody wants me to come. Except for my aunt in the north, but they said I can't go with her. I see how it is though. I'm just trying to keep me cool, but it's hard because I still got to wait for court, and that's just to tell me I have to go to a group home. That's messed up.

I'm just going to have to pimp this group home so at least I could be out for my birthday. I already been locked up for my past two birthdays. Well that's it for now.

To all, keep ya'll head up.

-Loony

From The Beat: We are very sorry to hear about these troubles with your family. It must feel terrible, and we wish you could have been with your loved ones over the holidays. But if you look at it from their shoes, do you think your family members have good reason not to trust your words, based on what has happened in the past? What can you do to earn their trust again?

Dear Beat, What Matters The Most

I think making my mama proud matters the most but I also think making money matters the most because if I already made my mama proud, then I should focus on my life and get that money so I can take care of myself and my family.

And I also think my freedom matters the most because if I'm not free how am I going to make my mama proud if I'm locked up or how am I going to make that money and be a millionaire if I'm in jail all the time?

-Festy

From The Beat: So are you saying that your mama, money and freedom each carry the same weight of importance to you? Can you achieve all at the same time? You say that you may have "already" made your mama proud, but pride isn't something that is permanent. If you were doing really good, and then started doing illegal and harmful things to make money, do you think your mama would continue to be proud of you?

This Life

This Sambo and this is my fourth time here. This time is different because I'm on very thin ice right now. I'm on the edge of getting sent away for a long time. Every time I come in here I tell myself that it will be my last time but I just can't keep my word.

It's hard out there in the streets of Oakland. The smallest thing could be the biggest mistake.

The last time I was in here it was my sixteenth birthday. I hope the judge says that I can go home with my family this New Years because I have a lot of changes to make. Now I realize that the stupid things I do can affect hella people around me. About \$5000 worth of damaged property and restitution to pay. I have a job but now I need about four of them.

To all the other people out there trying get it like me keep your head up and play the game. Don't let the game play you.

-Sambo

From The Beat: Having to pay back those you've affected does really make you see the connection between you and them. The more you think about your actions' effects on other people, the more you start treating them the way you would like to be treated. And ultimately, isn't this something we all want from each other?

A Trip To The Halls

I'm posted up on the block, my hand is rested on my stock.
 I'm waiting to get off the next piece of that crack rock.
 Damn! Who is that driving down the block all slow and shhh, oh! Damn! That's the boys
 And as I turn to run the other way, I'm surrounded by them big boy toys
 So I get on the ground,
 Now my hands are bound.
 My .40 sitting on the hood of nark car,
 But my dope is a last hope,
 It's way under the ropes.
 As I look around,
 It seems like the whole city is surrounding me.
 Moms got tears in her eyes,
 And little sis is looking at me like, "Why?"
 So I close my eyes, try too hard,
 So I don't fall apart.
 (In the interrogation room)
 "Who's gun is that?"
 I look at dude and tell 'im to shut up
 I'm not no snitch so I tell him it's mine
 Now I gotta go serve my time
 For the 10th time.
 Am I ever gon get it through my head
 That I'm in a lose-lose situation? Only time will tell.

-D Boii

From The Beat: You've got the mind to go far, Deangelo. But will you? As you say, only time will tell. If you can rise above your conditioning, step outside of what you know best, and have the courage to move into the unknown (the world is so much bigger than what you've experienced so far), you have a chance to be someone that the rest of us might look to for leadership. If not, the leadership you provide will be confined to a few others, all boys and men, who will be confined with you. We need what you can give, so you know which path we're hoping you travel.

Racism Greets Barack Obama

Day after day, I hear people say, "He's a black man. He's form the projects. He can't run no White House. The White House is only for white people." So hating on that ninja Barrack.

Let him do him. It ain't like he lied to us already. People of all races won't even give him the benefit of the doubt. He for all the people not just black people, 'Cause he black, his mama white, if anything he going to help them first.

This to all the people: let that ninja do his thang. Hopefully he paint the White House black, but all we can do as his people is believe in him.

-Terrance T

From The Beat: We're not sure who you are hearing say all these racist things about President Obama. The fact is, he was elected by a majority of all races voting for him — black, white, Latino and Asian. According to CNN's latest polling, "...three-quarters of the public thinks President-elect Barack Obama is a strong and decisive leader, the highest marks for a president-elect on that characteristic in nearly three decades." In other words, he's very popular with all segments of our society and all races.

People of all races won't even give him the benefit of the doubt. He for all the people not just black people,

Liar

Man, I wanna talk about something. It ain't got nothing to do with the topics, but I'ma put a little work in fa ya, ya heard me? Have you ever listened to somebody talking 'bout this and that and you know they lying they ass off? Man these dudes be talking 'bout what they do, but I do research on it and find out they lying. Why do people lie for? 'Cause they wanna fit in with the crowd. I'm just saying don't sell people stories if it ain't true.

-Bc

From The Beat: In a perfect world (if everybody lived according to what their religions and gods teach), there would be no lying. But this is not a perfect world. When our politicians feel free to lie to us, why should you be surprised that people at the "bottom" also lie?

New Year's Wishes

Merry Christmas! Al the presents I need is me waking up on Christmas day and see new years. I would be thankful enough for that. Underneath that, I wish my mob back home a merry Christmas, and a good new years. My baby back home, merry Christmas from your boy.

-Simba

From The Beat: We hope you get your Christmas wish as soon as possible, but we have another wish, which is that once you are able to wake up at home on Christmas day, you never give that gift up again.

My Life

My life on the street is tough. I been through a lot. My way of making money is to rob people, sell crack, and all that other shhh. The only reason I rob people and sell crack is to be remembered by other people and to survive in the street.

But now I wanna make my family proud of me by going to school and playing football and getting my GED. But I don't know if I can play football or go to school and get my GED because I'm locked up all the time. I hang around the wrong people. So if you reading this, stop hang around the people that get you in trouble.

-Uso

From The Beat: We hope you are able to follow your own advice. If you keep hanging with these same people, then you can expect the same results. It's up to you to make the change that your are advising others to make.

Yamzayin'

Yung Mary, am I pissed? Yes, very
 Girls in the halls need a razor, lookin' kinda scary
 Beezies try not mutt me, no neva been scary
 Don't get milked up cousin, "fo you get sent back to the dairy
 It's the real life, ain't no tale fairy
 It's the same beezies, don't switch over, stay in yo' lane
 When I confront them, they wanna complain
 Aye, yo' moms don't worry I'm in the halls thuggin', doin' mah thang
 I'm tryna make a rap wit' no brain
 Disrespect my block, I'ma make it rain
 Knowing god he with me through all mah pain
 If you read this you know I'm not playin'
 God with me to the end, yamzayin'

-Yung Mary

From The Beat: So you think God is with you even when you "make it rain," even when you create a "hurricane" of revenge? Do you think God is with you but not with those you rain on? Does God love you but not them? What kind of God is that? (Some of your threats were too graphic to include.)

Chasing Death: (Another Man that Fell Victim)

Every day I wake up, I wonder if its my last.
Is this the day I'm gonna meet my match and get blast?
This life is fast, not even the wind can keep up with my wrath.
My block is trash...
That's the thought that comes through my mind, as I walk down the path
Where I got my dope stashed.
Then I see a flash!
Aw shih!
Now I'm hit!
My thigh is burnin',
And my bones is hurtin',
And as I look up I see the car peel off down the middle,
but I'm in shock,
How the hell did I get caught,
I should have shot,
Now I'ma have to get revenge,
But not until I can get my leg out of this binge.

-D-Boii

From The Beat: We wish you would read again what you wrote in your Piece Of the Week, "My Mind In Deep Thought." Here, you abandon deep thought and return to promoting the black-on-black violence that other piece denounces. Besides giving you temporary pleasure (and earning you a reputation that may help you on the streets but will ensure your future enslavement), what is gained by the revenge you sought? How can you ever bet beyond this war that leaves you injured and so many dead or imprisoned?

What Matters?

What matters most is the people I love
It's like they came from above
I feel I'm soaring like a dove
Thinking about the shhh I do
Come to think about it, the stuff ain't coo'
In this cell actin' like a damn fool
But to be true
I'm really coo'
But being in here I miss my boo
And that ain't coo'
After a month I need something to do
Family a'ight but they know they miss me
I heard ninjas at school tryin to diss me
Otha girls wishin' they could kiss me
But I got my girl that ain't goin' nowhere.
So mess wit' your boy and you could go wherever you like

-Snax

From The Beat: We hope you are one of the people you love, so that you respect yourself enough to keep yourself free when you get out of here. What's your plan?

Lil' Bra's Situation

Dear Beat,

This ya boy, Lil' Bra, I'm still in this g thang trying to be patient. What I think is messed up is how I got my right to release. I should have left like three days ago. All I can do is try and be patient. It's hard, but it takes a lot of work. I only came in for a warrant and I been in here for six weeks straight for missing court. It ain't fair, but I should have gone to court.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: Is it worse to be locked up for a new charge or for a warrant? We ask that because we can never quite understand why you'd allow yourself to get a warrant for something entirely within your control (like showing up in court when you're supposed to). Well, we hope you get the release deserve soon — and that you keep your appointments!

Same-Ol', Same-Ol'

Another new year huh... same-ol', same-ol'. That's all it is, yo, just another ninja sayin', "It's a new year, ninjas ain't playin' out here no mo'. Dudes is getting they head busted."

Stop it dude. I'm tired of hearing that. Ninjas been dropping from way back. This ain't nothing new, just another new year with a new dummy.

But on the real, fa real, I hope my ninjas make it to see the new year. But I'm in here, so I'm gone see it. Just hope I be out for 2010.

-E-Boy

From The Beat: We agree that the violence in the streets is not new, but that only makes it more critical that things change. If you don't see any possibility for "things" to change, what are the possibilities that you, personally, will change so that if you do get to celebrate the next new year in freedom, you will be able to keep it?

Wasted Days, Wasted Nights

G-vole, Beat? You know the name, the one and only Grumpy. Still firme, still maintaining, still keepin' a tight rip on my composure. Boredom rising daily, situation getting more and more critical by the day, pero it ain't nothing I can't handle.

I'm not in the mood to hit up the topics. Actually, now that I'm gripping on this pencil, I don't even feel like writing... Forget it, this jaina is out. Back to my rent-a-box. Ha! Orale, pues al rato.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: The question isn't whether you can handle it or not, but why you would put yourself in this position to have to handle it in the first place. The "rent-a-box" you're in has a short-term lease. It's up to you whether it will be replaced by a long-term one or not...

Not Listening To Mom

I'm mad because when I went to court early, I thought I was gone get out. But I didn't because my mom wanted me to stay here. I was being bad at home and not listening to my mom. That why she want me to stay in here.

-Yung Thug

From The Beat: Everything we do (and everything we don't do) carries consequences. Will this experience change how you relate to your mom when you do get out?

Lil' Prec

I apologize. I didn't cheat,
but this time around I don't have nothing for The Beat
'cept you know I go hard and I'm Caprice.
You won't hear nothing from me 'til I get released.
Matta fact, a bra throw that back
I miss you though, hafta give you some slack
Just to let chu know you taking game back
Get out, go home straight like that Lil' Prec, I go, that's a fact
Miss being on the block making racks
Shut up bezzzy, hand me some stacks
Give me my shhh. forget them tax
It's the team I came in a pack
I go, ha, to the max
Read my shhh and sit back and relax
I'm gone for now... bet you can't wait to read the next

-Lil' Prec

From The Beat: All that talk about stacking your chips on the block makes us worry for your future. Of course, if you like it here, then go right ahead, back to the things that led you here, since we both know that the same behavior results in the same consequences. On the same hand, if you want to change the consequences, you also have to change what leads to them.

What Matters?

What used to matter to us, we want it to last
It was you and me till the end of time, a family to our baby
and nothing else
And now all of this and much more is in the past
Between me and you there is no trust
I think that never was, and life always taxed
What matters to me is not you or me
It's Lavelle, my baby, my love,
An' everything she would always be
My love for her will never leave, you better believe
'Cause the happiness of my baby girl Lavelle is the only
thing that really matters to me
And that's how it would always be till the end of time.
Love

-Lavelle

From The Beat: Let your love for Lavelle keep you moving forward, up and out of here, never to return. She needs the love of her father in her life, just as you need her love in yours.

Skip's Broadcast: Merry Christmas

It's that time of the year again, and I'm having the misfortune of being here on my first Christmas. Or it looks that way. It ain't really merry at all, but at least I'm alive. I've given my mama that much.

I'm alive! That shows a little success. They done changed my plan. I'm to Wyoming for 6-9 months, so that's better than the Ranch for me. But I'm 'bout to go to sleep and think of something for y'all next week. But if I'm gone by then it was my pleasure. Boom!

-Skip The Flyest

From The Beat: We're curious to know why you think Wyoming is better for you than the Ranch. Wherever you go, Skip, it's always going to be your own attitude — what YOU bring to it — that will determine how much you get out of it (and how much they get out of you). You've shown us that you're ready to move beyond the past and fly (not just be fly). We're very happy you're alive. Having you in these workshops has been our pleasure, and we thank you. (When you get to Wyoming, keep writing us about what it's like and we'll publish you in The Beat Without section in the back.)

No Changes

I see no changes. I wake up in the morning and ask myself, "Is life worth living? Should I blast myself?" I'm tired of being poor. Even worse, I'm black, my stomach hurt, so I'm looking for a purse To snatch... Cops don't give a damn 'bout a negro, Pull the trigger, kill a ninja, he a hero.

-Rina

From The Beat: You might be right (which we doubt) that cops don't give a damn about blacks, but we see far more killing of young blacks by other young blacks than by cops. So — forgetting the cops for a minute — do blacks give a damn about other blacks? How does "blasting" anyone (including yourself) solve any problems?

Why Me?

Why every time I try to do good, something bad comes along? I try to be strong, hold my tears inside, the pain so tough I just hold my head down an' cry. In and out of jail got me wondering why every day I wake up, feel I'm fighting for my life. Why me? I know why, 'cause the devil trying to bring me down, trying to take my feet off solid ground. But I can't let him win 'cause I'm a child of god. If I get myself together, he can handle it all. Why me?

-Twin

From The Beat: What are you doing to get yourself together? God helps those who help themselves, so maybe he is sending you a message by putting you here. Are you listening to him?

What Matters?

The thing that matters to me is the farm bam, which includes the block, set, whatever you wanna call it. Making money and risking my freedom to get it matters. I'm tryna have my cake up. Been there and don't wanna go broke. Sometimes you have to do what you have to do to survive.

In the streets respect matters a lot. Either you with the shhh or not. Going out like a punk ain't a option. Going to jail is one thing but going to jail for taking care of yourself and family is another thing.

-T-Ras

From The Beat: Well, the bitter reality is that once you go to jail, you face the same slave-like conditions whether you went for selfish reasons or because you thought you were taking care of your family. After all, if you really did what you did to survive or to take care of your family, then who is taking care of your family now? And who is taking care of you?

We Keep Doing Wrong

Yes, we can do what we want, but we always do the wrong things that get us in here. We all say we going get out and do the right thing, but we go running back to the block, see some guys you don't like or got beef with, and go grab the chop. Then the police come take you down and you come back to this shhh hole.

-Emonie

From The Beat: You can't blame the police for putting you here if you play with guns. If you choose to "grab the chop," then you're also choosing to give up your freedom. Or worse.

Family

It hurts not to see my family on Christmas 'cause all my family is gonna be at the house, and my cousin, I haven't seen in hella long. So it hurts.

My ex been talking to moms and wants to see me when I get out. Dad said he got me a present, but I don't think I can open it on Christmas, and it hurts that I can't party with big brother that I love so much.

I might get out January 2nd if the witness don't show. I hope he don't cause I just wanna get out now. I know mom will cry. I just hope I don't go bad and beat someone's ass or start banging on my door and just lose it!

-McLoven

From The Beat: What do you mean you "hope" you don't go bad. Hoping is not enough. What is required is a commitment to change. Without that, even if you beat this case, you'll find yourself facing more down the road. Your mom wants to cry with joy for you, not with pain. Can you give her what she wants?

Skip's Broadcast: Merry Christmas

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From The Beat: We're curious to know why you think Wyoming is better for you than the Ranch. Wherever you go, Skip, it's always going to be your own attitude — what YOU bring to it — that will determine how much you get out of it (and how much they get out of you). You've shown us that you're ready to move beyond the past and fly (not just be fly). We're very happy you're alive. Having you in these workshops has been our pleasure, and we thank you. (When you get to Wyoming, keep writing us about what it's like and we'll publish you in The Beat Without section in the back.)

You Can Do Anything

What's good with The Beat? Man, I don't know when I'm getting out. They tryna play me. But if you do the crime, you do the time. All the dudes out there, don't do the crime if you can't do the time. Keep it pimpin', do yo' time like a G. If you put yo' mind to it, you could do anything.

The one thing white people scared of is a educated black man. I'm going to be here for a few months, but if you ain't ready for them time, then don't get involved. I'm gone.

-Taddy

From The Beat: If "white people" are scared of an educated black man, then yow are you planning to educate yourself, and what do you plan to do with that education?

Not My Day

Hey Beat, this Banana. today is 12-15-08 and today is not my day. I feel like going off, but I need to be coo' so I can get the hell out of here. I miss ma Bra Spank, RIP, and all my cousins.

My birthday is coming up May 7. I will be 19. They need to send me to 850 and stop playing with me. I'm about to be in here for Christmas. Damn! That's messed up. But its coo' 'cause ma mom going to bring me some food and I'm going to ma bra unit and eat with him. I wish I can go to unit to see my hubby, but it's coo'.

I'm out. Love, Banana.

-Banana

From The Beat: If you can control that feeling of wanting to go off when you're in here, then you can also control it on the outs. In fact, we all feel like that sometimes, but being able to stop ourselves (to avoid consequences) is one of the differences between being a child and being an adult. At 19, it's time for you to be that adult.

Tryna Play Me

What's good with The Beat, man? I Just want to talk to y'all 'bout something. I just want to let you know that the narcs ain't shhh! I don't want to get into details, but they got me in here off some BS! I don't know. I think it's a break from the block, though, beating the block all day and night! It's sort of a vacation without relaxing is what I'm trying to say!

Really, I think the police is trying to keep me on probation because I only have four more months of probation, and somehow, someway, I'm back in here over some two-months-ago stuff they talking about! I don't know. I'm just going to sit down and knock this time out and get back to school when I get out!

-Wink

From The Beat: They may be "playin' you," but you're the one that gave them the power to do it. Whatever that "two-months-ago stuff" was, it carried consequences. You can hate those consequences, of course, but the only way to avoid them is not to do the "stuff" that leads here. Your last sentence is the most important, and if you follow your promise to get back to school (and finish it), the consequences will be much better for your future.

What's Matters?

There are hella matter to me 'cause I'm tired of here. And it is matter to my family because I made them sad. It is time to wake up. I'm my parents' only child. I miss them.

-Golow

From The Beat: Your parents have sacrificed a lot for you in their lives. Now it's time for you to do something for them. When you get out of here, don't let them take you again... Stay in school and do the right thing.

Doing The Best I Can

I feel like I can change my actions by doing the best that I can when I get out — by going to school and helping kids out in any way they need it. I am planning on going to college and to get a good job.

-Jb

From The Beat: If you keep this promise, you will find your life changing for the better. There is nothing greater than helping the young who are in need of so much help. First help yourself (finish school), then you can be most effective in helping others.

What's Good

I'm just trying to make it back to the 'hood. But first I gotta finish up in Colorado. I'll be home in a minute, though. Keep y'all heads up and pray for me, 'cause I be back to do it big for my eighteenth.

-Kirsten

From The Beat: We hope you gain enough insight and knowledge in Colorado that when you "do it big" for your birthday, you also do it safely and legally. Good luck with the program.

Still In This Thang

You know they got ya boy sittin' for a min., but you know I'ma thug it out. Stay solid to the block till my casket drop. But my baby mama trippn' 'cause they tryna give ya boy hella time. But I love my baby mamma at the fullest, so I don't care how much time they give me.

When I get out, she still goin' be my wife no matter who she messin' wit' 'cause when I get out we still goin' be together, ya heard me.

It's ya boy Man-Man, but you know my big homie named me Two Man. But to my baby mama, I love you straight like that, ya heard me.

-Man-Man

From The Beat: You have a strange idea of love. You clearly loved something more than your baby mama because you left her (and your baby) behind to do what pleased you. Real love requires sacrifice, giving up things you like doing in order to do things for the person you love. You think she should wait for you even though you left her (through your actions)! Yes indeed, a strange idea of love.

Looking Forward To Freedom

I'm Marcelles. I'm locked up right now for a sale, which I didn't even do. But hopefully tomorrow after court I get out. My PO and attorney said I'm going to get out, so I'm looking forward to not coming back and sitting in that cold cell.

-Marcelles

From The Beat: Of course you're looking forward to not coming back. So, what changes do you plan to make so that reality comes true?

Same Ol' Shhh

Chea mane, what's up with The Beat? A year from now a ninja gone be fresh out of the Ranch, but it's cool though. I'm gone hold it down while I knock this time out 'cause when I touch down, ain't shhh gone had changed. Everything gone be the same I guess.

Living in that fast life make you grow up real quick. Ain't no time for change in the streets. Same shhh different day.

-Young Phil

From The Beat: Oh yes, there is time for change, but only if you want to make it. We know too many young people who have chosen a different path from the one that led them here to believe that it can't be done. You say that living the fast life makes you grow up real quick, but we think living the fast life doesn't allow you to grow up at all. The so-called "game" is one played by boys, not men.

Missing My Family

What's good with The Beat? Me? Nothing. Down here at the Ranch, thinking 'bout the fam bam. Man, I could be out with my fam. They be telling me they miss me and they need me. Man, when I be talking to my big sister, she be telling me what's going on with the fam bam.

When I get out, I'm go' stay out so I could be with my fam and do something new. It's something on my mind this week.

-Tizzle

From The Beat: Of course your family needs you free and home. We admire you for committing yourself to staying out, once you're home, but what's your plan for keeping that promise? Determination is necessary, but not enough. What will your first steps look like?

Hard To Get Out Of Trouble

What's good with The Beat? This yo' man, J.O., reporting from Log Cabin Ranch School, trying to stay focused at the Ranch, because it easy to mess up, but hard to get out of trouble. They have more excuses than a ninja goin' to jail, plus some of the residents be snitchin' up here. That shhh ain't cool, because you playing with people' lives. If a ninja snitch on me, it's on. But, anyway, I'm doin' cool so far, besides taking it one day at a time, you feel me?

-Jo

From The Beat: You're right, when people snitch it's "playing with people's lives." But when you commit a crime, when you're in the beef, when you do a lick, when you pick up a gun — don't all of those things also play with people's lives? Why is it all right for you to play with their lives in that way? So, what will you have to give up or start doing, or both, to make it on the outs without messing up — without playing with people's lives? There will always be snitches, so the only way to avoid them is to stop giving them stuff to snitch about, ya dig?

One Year Older And One Year Wiser

Ya dig? This that Shotty Ninja comin' at chu lames, straight up, so put yo' 3D glasses on.

Back to the topic. This year ain't brought a thug nothin' but straight up heartache and pain. Only thang I didn't know was girls ain't shhh, or, at least, some of them ain't shhh. They gone leave you if they love ain't true. Ninjas know how ugly shhh can get when them old years leave and them new years bring tragedy, but luckily I ain't got them troubles. 2009 gone be one of them years. Watch! That's what I learned.

To all doing time, hold that head up and don't let yo' chin touch yo' chest. One love to my thugs.

-Shotty Ninja

From The Beat: Relationships are always difficult, even in the best of times. But just because you got "left" by her doesn't mean that "girls ain't shhh." There are girls who are shady and boys who are shady, and fine individuals, both females and males. In fact, sometimes all of us act kind of shady at times and wonderfully at other times. What will 2009 bring in your life?

Changing For Myself And My Family

Well, my mama says that praying helps. Well, it does. I know that my handwriting is different than others. If you could read this, I'm surprised.

I believe in Barack Obama. He could change things that Bush couldn't do. I'ma change my life by quitting smoking and going to school, and be with my family.

-Juan

From The Beat: Real change always begins with each of us. We can help Barack Obama to make big changes by making changes in our own lives. Quitting smoking and going to school are both important, so we hope you keep this promise!

Waking Up Like A Dream

Waking up like a dream?

Who the hell am I

Taking to myself alone

Keep being told all the time

When do I have freedom

I don't know

But one thing is

I'm a bad boy

Waking up like a dream?

Think too much

What happen to next day,

Preying at my mind.

I don't want to stay here,

But I have to keep it up,

Wait until time

Wasting my time doing this stuff

Waking up like a dream

If I go home

I promise I'm gonna be a good boy.

My dad said, "Home boy,"

And I say, "Wha' sup"

I love you

And this well never mess up.

-Ben

From The Beat: Does this mean you are waking up to a different future? When you say you're going to be "a good boy," can you tell us what you mean? What will you do (or not do) that will say you are a good boy?

Everything, Only Thing

Eyes open wide when I first seen her face,

Didn't know what to do... was so high felt like I was in space,

Walked up to her the next day, try to say hello,

Jus became friends, gotta keep ma feelings on the low,

Face, body so beautiful, eyes so sexy, thought it was a dream

Damn! She stole my heart, never wanted to leave,

So I kept her around,

Thought in my head I finally found...

-Young Chuey

From The Beat: Most of us have been in the situation you describe where we have feelings for someone but don't know if that person has the same feelings for us. We hope this works out to be what you hope it will be.

Yes We Can

Barrack Obama, he the first African-American president.

He the man who change everything in America. I'm proud that I told my mama to pick him. I know he could do it. My family was happy and proud. My mission was accomplished.

What matters? The important thing I worry about is family because they took care of me when I was little until adult. I love you family. I well make them proud of me one more time.

One year older one year wiser. I don't miss 2008 hard time, but I still work it out.

Wake up. I'm tired of waking up 6:00 a.m., eat alone sometimes. We didn't have freedom at all. I can't wait to get out. God protect me.

-Ben

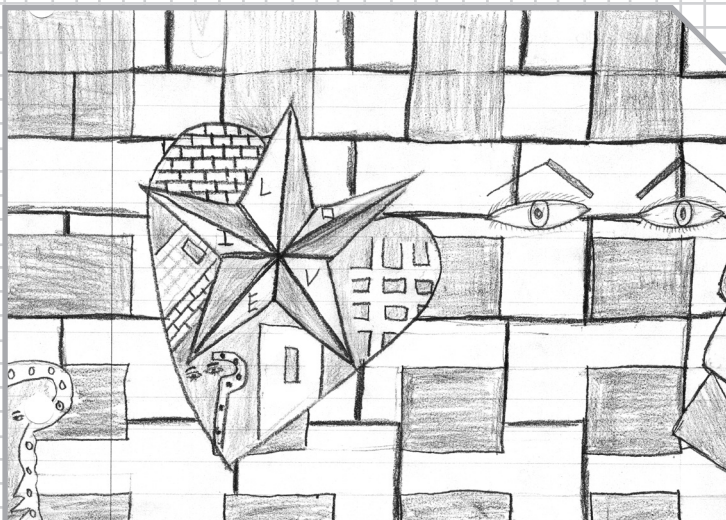
From The Beat: Ben, your Beat facilitator should have told you to write on just ONE topic at a time, not three or four. When you write on so many topics, you really can't say much about any of them. Next time, take just one topic and write as much as you can about that. Thanks.

Happy But Worried

Man, I feel mad because I worry what is going to happen to me tomorrow, if I'm getting out or not. But no, I'm having fun because y'all here talking to us. But I'm feeling happy because I'm out here having fun with y'all. But I'm feeling a little mad because I might not get out tomorrow.

-Fia

From The Beat: Whether you did or did not get out already, you will get out. So what do you plan to do differently at that time that will keep you from returning?



Loyalty

Cam: I think everything serious. You gotta break everything down like a car. You gotta take everything apart, like the engine, to understand it.

George: Loyalty. Everything revolves around loyalty. Loyalty is like the main ingredient.

Cam: Without loyalty you can't really get with nobody. I'm loyal to everybody around me positively. I'm loyal to my family, my street family. I'm loyal to my girl friend sometimes. I got one girlfriend. Like when you get one, one of them predicaments, you follow that thing in your chest called an icebox, growing up in a world so cold.

CT: I got an icebox where my heart used to be.

George: He lyin'. He got six girlfriends. Chris, too. I only got one girlfriend.

Cam: That's why some people play with their hearts, because it's a cold world.

George: You can't be loyal to everybody because some people can't be loyal to themselves.

CT: Honesty is like when yo' girlfriend don't lie to you. She tell you everything going on with her. She don't keep no secrets from you.

Cam: But if she keep secrets, you can't trust her.

George: Like when they don't know what to do with themselves. Say your friend wanna do something illegal, like, go steal a car, and you don't want to, but you do because he asked you, and you both get caught and go to jail. So you're in jail for something you didn't want to do, but you did it for your friend instead of for yourself.

-George, CT & Cam

From The Beat: Are you always honest with your girlfriends? If not, why do you expect them to be honest with you? Trusting someone to be honest, including yourself, can be tricky. As for doing something illegal because a friend asks you to, it's you who lives with the consequences, like coming to the hall. By being loyal to your friends, you can be disloyal to your family at the same time, since it can lead to you being sent to a place like this when your family needs you with them. How do you balance those loyalties?

The Block

What's up with The Beat thang? You know a ninja like me modulatin' as usual. Shhh ain't the same, though, but I'ma hop on that on another piece of paper.

But this block shhh, it's a couple people that want me to leave the block alone, and it's like, why would I leave ninjas that I knew and did dirt wit'? I did my dirt on my time, and two of my ninjas held me down. I been down on an' off since, like, '04, but I'm content, ya dig? My ninjas do some shhh that at the time I ain't feelin', but I'ma stay wit' my ninjas regardless, ya dig?

My head gone when it come to the streets. I got dreams of goin' to college an' goin' pro in this football shhh. I wonder if I can do both.

-Cam

From The Beat: The simple answer is no, there I no way you can keep doing dirt with your boys and also succeed as a football pro. Sports pros come from college, where they have to perform in class, which can't be done when you're facing the natural consequences that come from doing dirt (the kind of consequences you're now experiencing). You ask why you would leave ninjas that you've done dirt with, and the answer is not difficult: because unless you do, you will not be able to achieve your dreams, and you will continue to hurt yourself and your family. Sometimes, being an adult means having to make very difficult choices. Those choices are not before you. We know what we would like you to choose for your own good, but the choice is in your hands.

Racism Greets Barack Obama

Day after day, I hear people say, "He's a black man. He's from the projects. He can't run no White House. The White House is only for white people." So hating on that n****a Barack.

Let him do him. It ain't like he lied to us already. People of all races won't even give him the benefit of the doubt. He for all the people not just black people, 'Cause he black, his mama white, if anything he going to help them first.

This to all the people: let that n****a do his thang. Hopefully he paint the White House black, but all we can do as his people is believe in him.

-Terrance T

From The Beat: We're not sure who you are hearing say all these racist things about President Obama. The fact is, he was elected by a majority of all races voting for him — black, white, Latino and Asian. According to CNN's latest polling, "...three-quarters of the public thinks President-elect Barack Obama is a strong and decisive leader, the highest marks for a president-elect on that characteristic in nearly three decades." In other words, he's very popular with all segments of our society and all races.



Malibu

If I could go anywhere, I'd go to the Malibu amusement park. I wouldn't swim because I'm black and I don't know how to swim. Hell no, black people can't surf. Malibu is like Great America and has Quesada. It's a college, a little place in Pennsylvania. They've got girls there, also games like Play Station, Pac Man. It 's like a community. I went there when I was seventeen with my family.

-Cam

From The Beat: Sounds like fun. We hope when you get out of juvy you and your family and loved ones can make this trip. What did you like best about your trip to Quesada when you were seventeen? (Of course black people can swim and surf. Anybody can do anything they put their minds to.)

You Can Do Anything

What's good with The Beat? Man, I don't know when I'm getting out. They tryna play me. But if you do the crime, you do the time. All the dudes out there, don't do the crime if you can't do the time. Keep it pimpin', do yo' time like a G. If you put yo' mind to it, you could do anything.

The one thing white people scared of is a educated black man. I'm going to be here for a few months, but if you ain't ready for them time, then don't get involved. I'm gone. Boom.

-Taddy

From The Beat: If "white people" are scared of an educated black man, then yow are you planning to educate yourself, and what do you plan to do with that education?

2008 Is Over

2008 is over with. I accomplished many things this year. It started off with me holdin' down my block and knocking shhh down to losing my freedom and thinking about a New Year resolution. I'm glad that 2008 is over and 2009 is coming. I'm getting older for real, for real. '09 is gone be my year.

-Lil' Danny

From The Beat: What resolutions did you come up with for the new year? Yes, you are getting older, so will your future reflect more maturity? In what ways?

What It Is

Merry Christmas to people who want a merry Christmas. What matters is a strong question. If it ain't, you are a simple-minded individual. What matters is whatever you believe in. if you don't have any beliefs, you are lost and full of emptiness. What matters I will not share 'cause the world ain't ready for Rambo.

-Rambo Rob

From The Beat: So, when do you think the world will be ready for Rambo. But forget the world... WE want to know what matters to you.

Mind Ya Business

What's poppin' wit' The Beat? Man, I'ma tell ya this! If you really ain't with the shhh, you should stay far away from this beef shhh, ya dig? Because families is getting hurt and life is getting took. So all you fake ninjas betta finish school and get a diploma, 'cause this beef ain't for you suckas. I'm thuggin'.

-CB

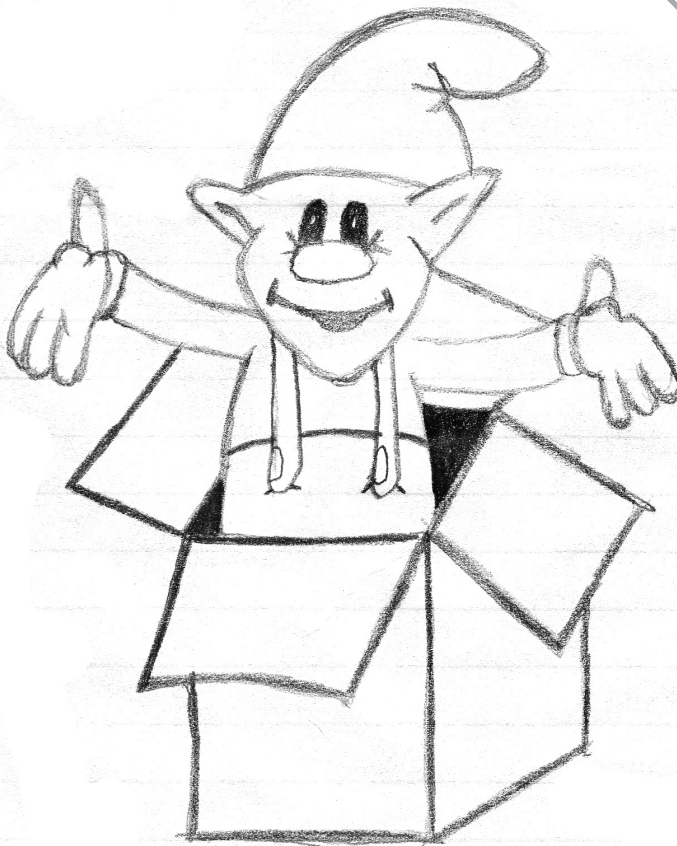
From The Beat: Why would you want to be part of families getting hurt and life getting taken? We think everyone — including you — should take your own wise advice and finish school and get a diploma. What have you got to lose?

I'll Be Cool At Home

What's up wit' The Beat? This Young Dri still in this thang. Man, I been locked up for four months. Don't know what to do. Being in here makin' me go crazy, makin' me insane in the brain. Just let me go home and I'll be cool.

-Dri

From The Beat: What does being "cool at home" mean to you? What will be different if you go home?



Changing For Myself And My Family

Well, my mama says that praying helps. Well, it does. I know that my handwriting is different than others. If you could read this, I'm surprised.

I believe in Barack Obama. He could change things that Bush couldn't do. I'ma change my life by quitting smoking and going to school, and be with my family.

-Juan

From The Beat: Real change always begins with each of us. We can help Barack Obama to make big changes by making changes in our own lives. Quitting smoking and going to school are both important, so we hope you keep this promise!

You Mean The World

I miss you. I love the way you hold me, kiss me. You wanted to take me away from my (?) so you can have me to yourself. You finally had me to yourself and I got locked up. You mean the world to me. I can't wait 'til I see you and kiss your soft juicy lips. I love you boy.

-Sexy Love

From The Beat: What does love mean? You say he means the world to you, but he had to mean less to you than whatever it was you did that let the system take you from him. Why would you risk losing someone you love, unless you loved something more?

Who I Cherish

Things that matter are things that you love and a lot of things that you adore, things that you cherish is what matters. To me things that I adore are my family, my homies and my friends and my loved ones. My freedom is what also matters. My life matters to me also because I only have one chance to live so my life matters to me a lot and I care for it.

To me, my respect means the same as my freedom but it's really on what is the situation. To me my mom means more to me than makin' money on the streets and any other way but if it's a legitimate way then it's a good way but if not then it's bad but my mom means more and most. Out of all of this my family, my homies, my loved ones and most of all everything I care for.

-Tanks

From The Beat: Freedom and respect, which to choose? When you are constantly worrying about the respect of others then in a way you're freedom is lost into your peer's opinions. How can you really be free when you need the approval of everything you do? What do you think?

My Jefita (Mother)

What matters to me is my family. My jefita (mother) is the most important person in my life because she's the one that has always been there for me.

-Cristian

From The Beat: Mothers are usually the ones that stick by your side no matter what, but don't you think it hurts her to see you in the situation that you are in? If she is the most important person in your life then show her by not coming back to the halls again.

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

Looking back a year, I made a lot of changes. Changes like going to school, getting good grades, and not messin' up my probation. I stayed out of the hall, for a whole year, and just one dirty bottle landed me back in here.

Being back in here is getting old, like it's little kid stuff. Just one mistake got me in here, but I should be getting out really soon and once I do I'm going to continue where I left in school and do my programs. I know I've said it every time I've been here but I'm for real. I'm getting too old for this, nah mean? So that's it, so stay coo' guys.

-Boracho

From The Beat: Sometimes it only takes one little thing to bring you back to the beginning but we know that you can bring yourself to where you left off. The roads may be hard getting there but you just have to stick to your goals and keep in focus what you want with your life. What will you do to make sure that you'll stay out for good?

Obama

I'm proud we finally got a black president! Hopefully, thangs will be poppin' for 2009, boy.

-Ruby

From The Beat: We're proud that a man of Barack's standing was able to win the vote too! How did you feel when you found out that Obama won the election? Where were you and who were you with?

Us, American Citizens

I think that it's going to be a big change by having Barack Obama as a president. It's a cool thing that there is a black president. Us, as American citizens should have different races, not just white people. So I think that having a black president will change everything.

-Rainbow Boy

From The Beat: What kind of changes do you think he will bring? Thank you for your opinion!

I Love My Family

Ay, what up, Beat? What really matters to me is my mom, two sisters, my niece and my family because they love me and they are my family. Well that's it, Beat. Alrato.

-Huesos

From The Beat: How do you feel being away from your family? Show how much you care for them.



I Love You

There's only one thing on my mind and it's you. I regret leaving you behind. Only time can tell if we're gonna still be together even though we promised to be together forever. We've been together through thick and thin but my actions seem to all have sin.

I always do things to make you sad and upset but all these things I always regret. I can't take time back but all I can do is fix the things that were whack. I don't know if you could ever forgive me but everything I'm saying is very sincerely

I love you with all my heart, mind, and soul. I just hope you don't leave my heart with a hole. Think this over and think it's good if you ever want me back just come to the hood.

-Elmo

From The Beat: Relationships are always complicated and keeping a long distance relationship is even harder because you aren't able to see that person everyday. Have you ever thought of sending her this letter to your girl? We know that she would appreciate this token of your love.

What Yung Uso Kefi Look Forward To

What's up Beat? This yung uso Kefi coming from the max. Today I'm going to talk about what I look forward to.

What I look forward to is seeing my mom every Sunday on visit. When she come see me, she make my day. I look forward to eating, 'cause you know I'm a uso, so I love to eat. I look forward to getting mail so I can know what good with the fam bam and my usos/boys.

There nothing that no one can take from me, even if they want to. I don't ask for nothing else while I'm up in here, you feel me. Until next time, to all my usos that locked up, keep your head up usos and you don't have to trip off me 'cause my head is always up, usos. Much love.

-Yung Uso Kefi

The Beat Within: We appreciate all that you look forward to while you're in here, but we wonder if you've given any thought to what your mother looks forward to. When your mom walks out of here after her Sunday visit, what do you think her wish for you is? Can you give her what she wishes for?

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

One of the most important things I learned this year that I didn't know in the beginning of the year is who my real friends are.

I realized who was real, I realized who would and who wouldn't snitch on you and I realized who would be the ones that just forget about you.

Now after goin' through this, I learned how to choose my friends wisely. But there's still much more to learn within these upcoming years.

-Dave

From The Beat: You're right, Dave, there is a whole lot more to learn about friendships. Friendships can be rocky, but if you really care about having that person in your life then both of you would have to be willing to work through your problems. We hope you chose friends who can guide you to a better place than here and show you that there are better ways to live life.

What Matters?

There are many things that matter to me such as my family and friends, all my loved ones, my belongings, all the little material (things), to the grand possessions of mine.

I have been blessed and given many things that matter to me. Even though the majority, or a matter of fact, all of them I will no longer enjoy, they still matter because they belong to me.

-Jon Jon

From The Beat: When someone gives a gift that gift will always hold a special meaning to us. What will you do with all of the gifts that you have received from family and friends?

What Matters Is Family

What's up Beat? Me nothing just bored, but yeah what matters to me is my family and my girl. You know family first and my girl is going to be part of my family. So those are the things that matter to me the most.

My family and my girl have always been there for me when times are hard or when times are good. But yeah all I got to say is I love my family and my girl but yeah to all doing time keep your head up.

-Memo G

From The Beat: It's great that your family and girl have always been there for you, but how will you be there for them? Don't you think you should be there for them as well? It's hard to do that when you're locked up and away from them.

Merry Christmas

Hey, what's up Beat? Well, I am just stopping by to say merry Christmas to everybody. This is my second Christmas in here. Now that I think back, the time goes hella fast. It was 2007 when I was chilling in here and now it almost 2009. I hope I get out next Christmas so I can be with my family and everybody else.

-Stomper

The Beat Within: Yes, time does go hella fast, so we hope when you do get back with your family, you make the changes you need to make in order to stay with them, before it's all gone!

Why Don't They Listen

Well what's up Beat? Well I'm not feeling this topic so I'm gonna write what I think. Well I'm thinking... why do some gangsters listen to their homies instead of listening to their family? I've seen that some people listen to their homies more than their families.

If they tell them to punch someone in the face, they will do it. If they tell them to steal a car, they'll do it. If they tell them to jack a car they'll jack it. But I wonder, why don't they listen to their mom when they tell them to go to school, to make their beds, to clean their room, to have good grades. I don't know why, I just wonder why.

-Jose

From The Beat: We don't know why? This is a very great question that you have brought up. It seems like a lot of people are more influenced by their peers than their family. Peer pressure? Why do you think this is? Have you experienced this? If so, what do you think were some of the reasons behind it?

Wiser

One year older, one year wiser.

It sucked how it happened I thought it never would.

A homie screwed me over just like the hood.

The hood was my lady and man, did it suck.

But I'm a wiser man and older now

so screw all and I'll be bound.

Bound for what, I'll never know,

but man let me tell you it will be no ho'!

-Arthur

From The Beat: Wow Arthur, what a strongly voiced poem! What does it mean to you? Is the word "ho" another way of talking about your hood? How did you feel writing out this poem?

Family And Money

What's good, Beat? This yo' girl, Faith. Yes I'm CACC in here but hopefully God's on my side. But what matters to me is my family, money, my city, and my other family. All these things matter to me because that is what makes my world go 'round.

Family is always first no matter what. Then it's that money, gouda, cheddar to keep on stacking. Don't got no ninja on my mind 'cause there's too much money out here to be made. My city of course because that's where the best "me" originated from, San Jose!!! And of course my other family, they all know who they are, so there's no need for that much saying.

And a piece of advice if you don't got no money you don't have nothin' and that's just how it is. "Money on my mind 'cause money is all I think of"- Lil Wayne.

But that's all for now, Beat. My sister Fame I love you and stay up.

-Faith

From The Beat: You seem to put a lot of focus onto money, why is that? There are other things in this world beside money, you just have to open your eyes wider! Why do you think money is such an important aspect in your life?

Last Time Writing

Well off Barack Obama, I think that he is going to make such a big difference and I think he will be able to help our nation to become a better place.

What matters to me most is that I want to be able to take care of myself and the people I love, and be there for them. I think the biggest thing I learned this year is to be careful of who I trust and also to just think every thing I do all the way through. Well Beat, this is my last Beat. I'm 18 and I ain't even gonna be back here. I get out in 17 days, and walk out the doors a free woman.

-Baby Face

From The Beat: You are putting a lot of responsibility on yourself, BabyFace, to want to take care of your family at such a young age. That's very brave of you to do because most teens would be running at this amount of responsibility. But you have to think about yourself also. Schools, career choices, boys! Remember that your loved ones matter but YOU also matter.

Money Can't Smile

What matters most to me is my familia and my freedom. I care about my family a lot, they mean a lot to me. Freedom is important too, if you don't got freedom in this world it's like saying you're owned by someone. I'd rather make my mom proud than make money because in money you can't see a smile and on your mom you can see my mom makes me happy. My friends matter to because they're always there when you need them.

-Luis

From The Beat: You're right, money cannot smile back at you and it also robs you of your freedom. Money pushes people to do things that they normally wouldn't do and therefore all of your freedom is lost in the mass of green. What do you think? Do you believe that money rules the world?

Like A Family

Well, I don't feel like writing about any of the topics, but I got some lines about something else to write.

Well, I'm one of 6 guys on supply and I can pretty much say all that goes on in that circle is shhhh talking, but then again we're like a family that doesn't really care about each other, but we're pretty much all kickin' it.

So yeah some of us are looking at some time and others aren't but we're all there to talk to each other. I'm out, Beat. 'Til next time.

-C

From The Beat: We're happy to hear that you're getting along with the other guys in your unit! The toughest thing about being incarcerated (other than having your freedom taken away) is the fact that you are living in a sharing space with complete strangers. But you better get used to it now because when you go to college (and we know you will) you'll have to share space with random strangers once again.

Shorty's Beat

Hey Beat, well I never see my Beats in the in The Beat Within. I'm disappointed that I haven't seen my Beats 'cause I know they were good. I've drawn things and they've gotten into The Beat, but I'm mad.

Well I don't got much to say 'cause I know this ain't even going to get published. I just wanna say Happy Year. I hope you guys enjoyed it while I'm here in this place. Until the pencil meets the paper again. Alratos (Later).

-Shorty

From The Beat: Well we have a a few week process in publishing your pieces. What you write in the workshop won't be published until a few weeks after that date. Also, we publish pieces that are from the heart and that other readers can relate to. Make sure to have a facilitator read your piece so they can let you know if it's appropriate.

when I unite with my family, I will dedicate myself as a full time family man to watch my children grow up...

My Son Matter

What matters most to me is my son. He is my other half and a spitting image of me. I am his provider, his savior, he's my world and my everything, along with my soon to be wife and my new child soon to be born in June. I miss them dearly and hope to be with them soon. They are what keeps me going; my motivation.

So when I unite with my family, I will dedicate myself as a full time family man to watch my children grow up and wish never to waste a minute in there lives. So that's what matters to me. I'm outs Beat, straight from Gilroy.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It's great that you have decided to dedicate your life to being a family man when you get out. That's what your kids needs the most, their parents. Don't you think your actions affect those close to you, especially your son? We hope your family continues to be a motivation to keep you away from making decisions that cause you to be in the halls.

What Matters

What matters to me is my family and friends because my family is everything to me. They were there for me for everything that I did and stuff.

My friends because they were there, that's what had happened for the past few days. Well not really 'cause of what happened last year or something so that's what matters to me more, and the block too. I'm out one love.

-Listo

From The Beat: What happened? You confused us. Can you make it clear for the next time?

Life Is Hard

Life is so hard and it seems that it's getting harder 'cause I'm in a constant battle for my position as a starter.

Second string ain't my thing, I'm at the top of the roster. Crazy is my team putting sauce on the pasta.

Kick it with the Jamacian rastas and Italian mobstas but the monkey's on my back mane, I thought that I lost ya

when I was huffin' and puffin on that thing filled with dark.

Well it was nothing but bluffin' when I said I feel no pain.

With so much to gain and really nothing to lose, I think the reasons are pretty simple for the path that I choose.

I got one life to live and I'm livin' to come up.

I got many rhymes to spit to let you know what's up.

Profile low is one thing that I'll be keepin'

and I always flow whatever crazy thoughts I'm thinkin'.

If you an enemy you will never get far

and this just refreshes my memory that life is hard.

-Yaya

From The Beat: And the results of your "reasons" are very clear as well - jail. You will also never get far if you continue living the same lifestyle you are living and keeping the same way of thinking. That's a guarantee. Life is hard, but you are making it harder with the decisions you are making. What will it take you to realize this?

Bullets Know No Names Pt. 2

My dad didn't believe me, when I got shot at,
The stray from the drive by hit the wrong kid in the back.

It all happened over seemingly nothing,
If he hadn't died, he could have been something.
Staring at his body it had me stuck,
Like a dumb ninja I forgot to duck.
That shhh was messed up, I ain't gonna lie,
He was just a lil' kid, he didn't have to die.
You know what they say, "Anything goes,"
Well another mother dropped another rose.
Just gotta keep your head up to the sky,
Everythin' happens for a reason, lil' mama please don't cry.
I know that we done seen better days,
I'm sorry mama, but I won't change my ways.

-Reaper

From The Beat: This is a very deep and touching poem. What personal meaning does it have for you? What are you expecting to happen to you to change your "ways"? Haven't you seen/experienced enough? Do you want your mother to be another "lil' mama" dropping another rose?

Don't Even Trip

What's crackin', Beat and Beaters? First I want to say, don't even trip off nothing sitting in here don't let it get to you. Estamos Unidos and we can strive and ride it out. Well, yes we can, like Ceasar Chavez said, "Sise Puede" we just got to believe in ourselves.

As for what matters to me, it's my family, family's first, they will always matter to me. The next big thing that matters is trust, honesty and loyalty and the biggest of all is honor. Without that I would never be who I am.

One more thing I want to say is, this year I really messed up. Now that I think of it, I learned from my mistakes. Now I think of stuff before I jump on the gun. Everything I've done it puts me two steps ahead of the game.

Well time is up, to all doing hard time don't trip I'm riding with you right beside you too. I know from experience now I'm in the situation that I'm in. Just pay more attention to what you do and who you kick it with. One love.

-Nena

From The Beat: You know what you've done, right, Nena? You've turned away from childhood and you've stepped into adulthood with two giant strides! How did you feel about making such huge changes in your life?

Yee

What's good, Beat? What matters to me most is freedom, family and a lot of little things like taking showers as long as I can, eating good food, sleeping with the lights off, ya dig?

My mom is like a friend and a mother, ya know? She always got my back and always cares for me even when I'm not doing good. She is very strong, like emotionally.

My dad and I just recently became close too and now I don't have a brick wall in front of me and my dad.

My sister, I'm close to her and I will protect her 'til the day of my grave, yaddadamean?

Keep yo' head up to all my ninja's in the struggle. Yee. Gone.

-Wolfy

From The Beat: We can see that you love your family a lot, and we know that they need you more than juvie ever will! What will you do to make sure that your freedom is never jeopardized and that you're able to be with your family?

"Yes We Can"

Well the topic is "yes we can". Well to tell you the truth I don't really care what promise's Barack Obama made, because he's going to get killed. And plus those promises are not made towards me. I don't think he is good to our country, the other vato should have won, orale pues Beat I'm out alrato.

-Kollmero

From The Beat: Why do you think that Barack Obama will be killed? What are your thoughts on his proposed policies? Why do you think the other vato should have won, Kollmero?

Family

Q-vo Beat? Today's topic is talking about what matters to us. Well, for me everything matter's. My family matters to me the most.

My block and hood matter as much as my family because those are the only things I got in life.

Respect does matter more than freedom because once you lose respect, no one will respect you no more. And on the other hand you'll get your freedom sooner or later.

So to all locked up keep your head up and to my carnal up in here to keep coo' and keep strong. This vatos gone.

-Vic

From The Beat: Your block and your hood aren't the only things given to you in life! There's a much more wider and exciting world that you still haven't seen! Why don't you explain to us what happens once respect for someone in your 'hood is lost? That expression has been popping up everywhere.

Good-Bye 2008

Damn, I wanted to start my new year fresh and doing good positive things, but I guess not. My new year is going to start with me being locked up but always positive, I'm gonna try to make 2009 as positive as possible.

I have learned a lot this year and damn I wish I would have known what I know now, it's still not too late. I'm gonna have a second chance to be free so I'm gonna take advantage of it when I get out, I'm going to get my shhh together, find that one man that's out there for me, and just live life to the fullest.

Well, to all those locked up: stay up and stay strong.

-Miranda

From The Beat: You have great plans in store for yourself, Miranda, what will you do to make sure that these plans come to life?

I Hate And Love "2008"

2008...

365 day of unforgettable memories,
the beginning and last of many.

2008 started off crazy.

It was the year I was adopted by the system.

It's been an emotional and exciting year.

I lost loved ones but I also gained loved ones.

I had many experiences and gained many life-learning lessons.

A good and bad year.

A happy yet sad year.

My first and last year.

What a year.

-Jon Jon

From The Beat: In a few short sentences you've described what seems to be a roller coaster year! What do you think 2009 will bring for you this year? How will you take charge of your life and make it different from last year's life?

My Baby Girl Ariana

Hey Beat, how's it going? This is Joseph coming out of San Jose. Well, I'm not feeling this topic so I'ma tell you about me and my girl.

I've been with my girl for a year and ten months since the 15th of December. Ever since me and my girl were together she's taken my stuff.

About nine months ago me and her wanted to have a baby so we did. Now, I have a little boy, but I hate the fact of me being in here when I should be out there with him and my girl.

Once I get out I swear I won't come back in here when I should be out there with him and my girl. Once I get out, I swear, I won't come back in here because it ain't the life for me.

Man, I can't wait 'til I get out because once I'm out I'ma move to Arizona to have a better life. I love you baby with all my heart and soul 'til the day I die, till death do us apart.

I Love You

I love my girl,

I love my son.

Never forget them

And never leave them,

I love them so.

When I'm out, love you more.

Love Joseph/ baby boy.

-Joseph

From The Beat: You really do change once you have a child. Sometimes people don't change as fast as they or their child would like them to but then others change faster than you think...we know that you're going to go through with this big change in your life because you have your girlfriend and son to think about now, not just yourself. Best of wishes, Joseph! Treasure the poem too! Best!

Money Matters

What matters the most to me has always been money, until recently it changed. The reason it changed was getting locked up.

When you're in here, all the money you have on the outs can't be used in here. When you're in here the only thing that matters is your family. When I was out I made so much money. Just partying on the outs, never going home and always violating my probation, from dirty bottles to not going to school.

I never spent time with my family, now that I am in here that's all I want to do. I am in here just wanting to get out. I don't want to get out to party or make money, I want to get out to spend time with my family and to appreciate all the things you have on the outs.

-Josh

From The Beat: How has being locked up made you reevaluate your life? We're happy to know that money is no longer the focus of your attention, Josh, but what about when you get out? Will your old lifestyle change into a more family oriented one or will you go back to being the same?

What Matters

The things that matter to me: my family and my homeboys, my freedom too. I hate being locked up and not having freedom.

Making my mom proud is better than making money. The way I could make her proud is by not coming here anymore.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We hope that you don't go back to juvie either, Anthony. What do you think you can do to make sure you stay out of lock up?

Here I Stand

Here, I stand on my own two feet like a real man. I have been here in the hole six months, with many more to come.

In my short time here, I have learned a lot about life, myself, and the people around me. I have learned to appreciate the small things, to be grateful for what I got, but to always strive for more.

Right now, I am just putting my thoughts on paper and my little sister is on my mind. It is messed up knowing that I can't protect her because of my actions, but that makes me want to succeed so I can be out there for her.

-Geko

From The Beat: We're so proud of you, Geko, because in this short letter you have told us a lot. Never settle for less in your life because you're worth more than that!

What Matters The Most

G-vo Beat? It's that Darky here again, writing The Beat Within. My family is the first thing that matters to me, especially my jefita. My varrio and homies also matter to me. Those are two things that matter to me

-Darky

From The Beat: You know, Darky, you could use your family as a reason to do well and stay out of lock up? Your family loves and needs you as much as you need them and with you gone it must be very hard on them. You could always try writing your family letters to let them know how much you miss and love them so that your time gone won't be so hard on your or your family.

2012

I never knew electing a black president was even possible. But we elected him because he was black.

But, what probably matters to me is the world. Global warming is still active everybody, 2012 is coming, prepare for the worse. Expect it to happen and it probably won't...

-Truth

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing, Truth? In a world where racism still exists, we were still able to elect a black man! We can see that you're very passionate about global warming. What can you do to make people more aware of global warming and its harmful effects?

Stay Loyal

As the years pass me up quick, I learned not to trust any prick, even the quiet ones seem to do some harm.

Just don't fall for their good looks and charm, they will have you hypnotized and lost in your mind. Then they will creep up and stab you from behind so don't sit in here and think your girl is being faithful. Just drop her so things ain't as stressful, not just girls but your homeboys too.

If you don't be careful they're gonna play you like a fool. When you think it's all good it's really all bad. Some fools will switch up and that's really just sad. Don't get into something if you're gonna turn back. Seriously if you already got a tack, you get your hood blasted across your chest.

Then just leave 'cause you can't hang with the best. But just to let you know no one's hard to find but I'll go with one last word.

Don't be fake, be loyal to your hood.

-Pancho

From The Beat: But what if the hood is not loyal to you? When you have a child does the hood pay for your baby's diapers and milk and clothing? They don't. Sometimes you have to be loyal to yourself and do what you want to do with your life.

What Matters

Well Beat, the topic we were given today is "what matters". Before I got locked up I thought things like money and nice things were most important, I felt that I needed them to be happy.

Since being incarcerated I've realized material items aren't all they're cracked up to be, what's most important to me is making my family and girlfriend proud, it isn't about how much you have, it's about hard work and respect.

I've got court soon, so hopefully by the time you read this I'll be at home on EMP, and out of this unit with the glassed off tier. And hopefully I keep my new state of mind and don't revert back to my old ways the second I get released.

-Eric

From The Beat: Creating a new state of mind isn't easy especially when you can easily relapse into your old ways. What do you think you can do to make this change you want a reality?

It Is What It Is

Aye it's yo' boy Mousie. I just found out I'm going to a 6-8 month group home. I hope I can pass my program. I have run from most of my programs and I am sick of being on the run, always watching my back. My PO is saying if I run I get 12 months in CYA, but it is what it is. Well I'm out for now, late Beat!

-Mousie

From The Beat: Choices, it all boils down to choices.

What Matters

What matters most to me is my family, my 6 month old baby girl Isabelle, and my man Gary. They're the ones I love and care about. Making them proud makes me happy!

-Ruby

From The Beat: When you start a family of your own you begin this bond and they become your whole world.

2008's Lessons

What's crackin', Beat?

Shhhh, it's crazy how time passes. I was in here last year around this time. Last year I thought I learned something, but I guess I really didn't since I'm up in here again with more time, but you learn how to move on.

Anyways, this year I've been through a lot and I think I learned a lot also and I'm not so childish as I was before. I don't hold things in anymore, I used to be mad at the world all the time, and blaming other people for my actions and for my mistakes. What 2008 has taught me is how to be responsible for my actions.

But anyways, I once again try to make the best of the situation and move on. To all, stay up.

-Rascal

From The Beat: You don't seem childish at all, Rascal, this piece really shows how much you have grown! Rather than complaining about your situation you're wishing everyone the best, and you're telling us where you have changed within yourself! Keep it up and we hope to hear from you soon.

Going Back Again

I was out on after care for a month and I got caught up in December. I came back on some new charges, I got pulled over in a stolen car and I got out and ran. So they're trying to give me stolen property, stolen car, and resisting arrest.

My PO was recommending 18 months L.A. but I was doing good when I was out, I was going to school and doing my programs. But I got suspended for getting down in school and I knew I was going back and that's why I started messing up, so my PO said he's gonna give me a chance and try to get me four months and programs, hopefully the judge wants to.

-Hersheys

From The Beat: Even though you thought that you were going back to juvie that doesn't mean you have the green light to go ahead and start messing up again. You were doing so well! You got in one little fight and you thought that all of your hard work was for nothing but you made it for nothing when you went ahead and stole the car. We know that you're better than that, you just have to be optimistic. How do you feel now that everything's happened?

Rough Life

Hello Beat, I'm not feeling the topic today so I'm gonna be telling a little story about my life in the streets 'cause growing on the streets has been very rough, 'cause I had to prove my name in a lot of ways, and that's why I got back in here so don't push me 'cause I'm losing my head the way I live I might end up dead and that's all.

-Jose

From The Beat: Growing up on the streets really is a rough experience, more rough than anyone really knows. How did it make you feel growing up? Is there anything that you would go back and change if you could?

What matters?

What matters to me most is mi familia {my family}, my family comes first. In the past I used to forget what was most important to me, that was when I was younger. Now, I'm older and more mature and always think of my family first. Not that I haven't before, I just used to let other things get in the way a lot; I do regret that, I love my family and that's what matters most.

-Flaco

From The Beat: Do you think that anything will get in the way of your affection for your family now? What happened to get in the way of you and your family, Flaco? Have you ever tried telling your family this?

One Year Older, One Year Wiser

Wow, 2009! A new year means new ways. I feel I have grown up more, I've become more wiser, more mature. So for the New Year I plan on acting like it. I made the decision before I even realized '09 was coming but I plan on sticking to my decisions from now, '09 and so on.

-Flaco

From The Beat: New Years' resolutions are always hard to follow but there are ways to make sure you stick to your plan. What do you think you will do to stick to your plans for '09 and the upcoming years after?

A new year means new ways. I feel I have grown up more, I've become more wiser, more mature.

Motivation

I just want to tell everybody don't give up. It's not over when you lose. It's over when you quit. Don't quit on yourself.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: That is great advice! Thanks for sharing it with everybody!

Father

I miss you so much.

I miss your smile, hoping you're getting through all the pain.

I'm praying everyday that it all goes away.

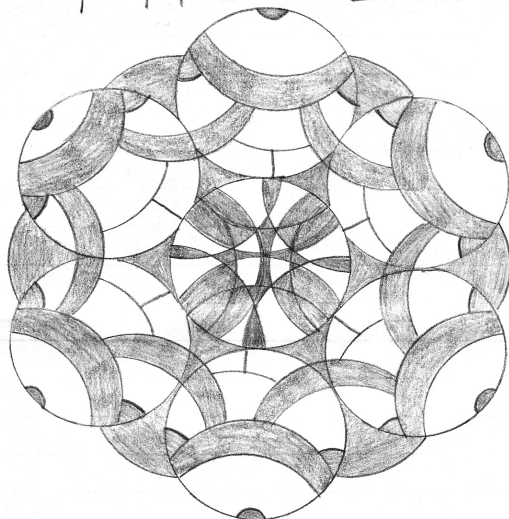
I love you very much until the end.

I'm here for you.

- Ana

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a great relationship with your father, cherish it and show him how much you care.

THE BEAT



WITHIN!

Crazy

I've been called crazy, how 'bout you?

I've been called that so many times I begin to think I'm crazy.

Now tell me what you think, a beep beep.

I'm coming with the IZ.

My space ship fell off course,

wait I mean I'm riding my horse. LOL.

I'm just playin' video games.

It just so happens all you cats are the same, and I'm not the one to blame!

So I'm going to re-track to A to B so I can get to sea safe.

Wait a minute - I mean see safe....

-Cthizzy

From The Beat: Nobody has the right to tell you that you are crazy. It can be easy and tempting to believe what people say, especially when you hear it over and over again. Remember you are the only person who can determine who you are and how you want to be portrayed/known as. Who do you think you are? Who do you want to be?

Who You Are

If I was in someone else's shoes I wouldn't be right. White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, I am what I am there ain't no changing that. I'm a mixed breed, white and brown.

In this life sometimes you might think of being some other race. But to me we're all human in a different color skin. Just know who you are and not think of what you could have been.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Lil' Mike - well said. This could not have been written any better. It is great that you are comfortable in your own skin. What's most important is what's on the inside, and often how you project and feel about yourself is how people will perceive you.

Don't Come Back

This is my thirteenth time in here and all the times I've been here is for violations of probation. When I get out I am going to be thankful for not going to youth center or placement. I hope I never come back.

-Ape

From the Beat: Will this time be the charm? We're sure you've matured since your first visit to juvie, but now is your opportunity to act on your own with wishes and show us that maturity. Prove to yourself that you'll stay out of trouble and out of juvie. We know you can stay out of trouble and we want you to show us that. Write us with an update!

I Wish

To live a different reality is something I wish I could, I imagine it every day, why couldn't I have just been good I wish for things that ain't real that you only see on TV, I wish to be someone else but right now I'm only dreaming

I wish to be in a different place, walk someone else's shoes, start a new life,

I feel I've paid all my dues

But I have accepted what I've always known, and that is I am why I am.

I can't be someone else but I can become a better man.

-“D”

From The Beat: D - your writing keeps getting better and better. Keep up the good work! Everyone makes mistakes in life - the important thing is to recognize when you've messed up, learn from this mistake, and correct it so it doesn't happen again. You are absolutely correct - you can't be someone else, but we believe YOU can become a better man.

Cold Space

Damn it's cold on this cell block

Death row foo' is the hell spot

Now I see no more

No more green in life

But black and grey concrete and steel

Y'all frontin' fools don't know how I feel

It's realer than real

Bangin' on concrete, and hangin' on steel

Feel me

I wish they'd kill me

Nanna ~and~ peel me

Peel me back way hard and far

At night I wish to relax and stare far in stars

Not on death row foo'

I'll spend my last days listenin' to cold heart blues.

-Pit

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of emotions pent up inside of you. We don't know your story, but please do not think you must go at this alone. Share your story with us and others who are willing to listen. There is a lot in life worth not giving up for. The opportunity to stare up into the stars is one of those treasures that can keep you hopeful.

Rough Sleep

I cut my wrist in the kitchen. Blood flows out as if a vampire were sucking at it. I awaken from my sleep, suffocating, scared as hell, as if I had just seen a ghost. Then I realize this has just been a dream. I go back to sleep. Later that day, with smoke coming out of my mouth like a chimney, I tell my friend the story of last night's dream. He says I'm on the verge of going insane. I tell him to bug off, and I walk away.

-B

From The Beat: Well written, B. Hey, we read just the other day that if you are relaxed as you enter sleep, and peaceful of mind, the chances are that your dreams won't become nightmares. The only other thing we have to say to you right now is: quit smoking. It's bad for you.

If I Could Return

If I could return to any day in my past I would return to the day I made a mistake and ended up here. I got another felony and I don't know what's going to happen when I go to court. I hope they don't give me a long time, and that I can be out free with the important people I love, such as my family and my little girl. Darn, I hope I get out that day.

-Jaime

From The Beat: We hope you've come to your senses and realize you must change your behavior. And if you're prepared to do that, then we hope you will soon be free.

A Place Of Peace And Quiet And Open Air

If there were "a place of peace and quiet and open air", I think the best way I would be able to describe it would be something like 'Thug's Mansion' that Tupac Shakur sings about.

My place would be somewhere I could kick it and chill and just stay away from problems. I don't know what it would be called, but I would love to have a place like that, so I wouldn't get into trouble. Maybe there would be sports or something else like that so we can stay out of trouble. You know, I don't know if there is a place like that, yet, but that's what I would like. It would be a good place for me.

Once again, I enjoy Dennis and his funny personality. He is a trip. Thank you for sending him here. Most of the kids here enjoy him. Well, hopefully, you guys will like what I wrote. Until next week, this is B. Later.

-B

From The Beat: Hey B, we like that hopeful use of the tiny word: yet. You can create a place that gets the job done. It probably won't be a mansion, but it could be a peaceful, trouble free place. We bet that if you think very hard, you might be able to come up with a place that's almost like that, and that does exist, right now. Go searching for goodness, and you will find it. So - take on a new mission in life - find a peaceful place, a place where you and a handful of others who seek the same thing, can find it. Let your mind walk up and down all the streets you know. What place comes closest to what you're looking for? Good hunting.

What Are My Thoughts?

My thoughts are about The Beat and that they give you the opportunity to write and release your feeling. It's a great way of venting.

I respect The Beat to the upmost for using their time to go to incarcerated juveniles and let them do positive writing. Thanks Beat. Much love.

-Colten

From The Beat: Hey, thank you Colten, for the kind words. We do this for many reasons. You've named a few. We can assure you that those of us who visit you guys get a lot from the experience, too. We love you girls and guys, and we want each of you to move past this sad and difficult time in your lives.

The Edge

I've been living life on the edge. It's beginning to feel like a one way road. I swear, these streets seem to keep on getting harder. My moms is disappointed in the life I've chosen.

-S

From The Beat: So, get away from the edge, choose another street. We sense that you're disappointed with your choices, too. Do something about it. Your mom gave you a great gift. Not to sound corny, but it's called life. And you only get one, last we knew. Don't waste it.

Missing Out

To start with, I would speak with integrity and cordial impeccability. This is my seventh month down and I miss my family and my future wife. I would love to take her away to a place no one else can go.

To my fellow homies - stay strong. We must incorporate professionalism in all aspects of our daily lives. This will eliminate the favoritism of the majority.

-Andres

From The Beat: Ooohh, nicely written Andres. You must be bedded down with the dictionary. In your situation, a dictionary is a very fine companion. Keep reading. Keep learning. Keep writing. This shall not come to waste.

Returning

If I were given a chance to return to a previous point in my life, I would decline that chance. Without the mistakes, I wouldn't have learned anything. For every mistake, there is a lesson to be learned. I try to not make mistakes, but I do make them, and when that happens, I regret it.

There was one BIG mistake I did a while ago, and I kept wishing to go back in time to fix that problem. But now I'm over it. Well, 'til next time, Beat... peace.

-W

From The Beat: Good piece, W. We do hope you regret any injury or pain your mistakes may have caused others. We have a feeling you do.

I Suggest

I just got a journal so I can learn new words. I'll write them down in the journal, along with the definitions. If you're locked up, I suggest you read and learn new words. And go to school. Get one step closer to that education.

-S

From The Beat: We second your suggestion. Further more, we suggest you start out with a goal of learning one new word a day. If you find yourself enjoying life with a more powerful vocabulary, you can learn two, or three new words each day. All the research says the same thing. Folks with the largest vocabularies tend to have the highest incomes, over the course of their lives. Folks with the smallest vocabularies tend to have the lowest incomes, compared to other folks. You want the cheddar? Then bury your nose in the dictionary.

My Life

My life is like a story,
or maybe a secret.
There's blood left in the gutter.
My desire is to live on the edge,
shame left behind.
I smoke it out with a laugh.
I will ride in danger
'til the day I become a ghost.
Or a distant dream.
Now smile for me.

-W

From The Beat: We are smiling - at your talent. But we're sad too, sad at the thought of all that talent at risk, in danger. Sad with the thought that you sound so careless. No doubt you're dealing with difficulties. The solution isn't at the edge. The solution is inside, in your heart. Choose to listen to the best part of you, W. You won't go wrong if you do that.

Mom

What matters to me most is making my mom proud. All my life I've been thinking about money and trying to find any way to make it. At the same time, I made my mom sad because of all the crimes I committed when I was younger.

Now, I'm 17 and a half and I'm still incarcerated but my mind is on making it in life and making mom proud.

-Andy

From The Beat: There has to be a better way to make money that isn't going to get you locked up. To get a better paying job we have to have skills and to get the skills we need to go to school or get some training. All parents want is for their children to be able to look after themselves and be happy and that means staying out of JJC.

Refusing To Lose

Hey what's up Beat! It's your boy, Lil' Kay. I'm going to talk about my release date because I get out in about two and a half weeks.

I'm hoping that I stay out for good because this ain't the way I want to be living. But that doesn't mean I'm going to stop going to the hood or kickin' with the homies. I still am. But besides that I'm going to get a job so I can be doing something instead of just sitting there thinking about bad things.

Well, talk to you later Beat. Many are fake, a couple are real.

-Lil' Kay

From The Beat: You've been an avid contributor to The Beat, and we hope you stay in touch with us even after you get out. Good luck and stay safe!

When I'm Locked Up

For the first time being in cuffs, I thought I was tough. I came to find out that being locked up is tough. Being in my room all day, staring wall to wall.

At times, I'm feeling weak but I will never ever fall.

I'm on my own, living life alone,

waiting for the judge to tell me when I'm going home.

-Mango

From The Beat: We have learned never to say never because we don't know what our limitations are. When we finally fall we will realize what our limitations were. If we continue to put ourselves in a situation that we have to withstand we will eventually fall.

I want out.

I can't wait to get out and wake and bake. This shhh is getting old. I'm tired of being told what to do and what to wear.

-Lil' Cl.

From The Beat: No one wants to be told what to do or wear but that's the deal behind bars. We advise taking the time to look at your life and see what you can change. We have to do more than wake and bake when we get out if we hope to change our patterns of behavior and stay out of here for good.

Missing My Family

I wish I could be out right now with my mom and my family. Instead I am locked up. But I will be out soon with them. They are like my idols. I look up to them because I love them. They treat me good. Right now I am very stressed out.

-David

From The Beat: It's hard not having that emotional support on a daily basis from your family, especially when you're stressed out. Don't give up yet, you'll be out soon.

For Mama

Growing up without my daddy and constantly in drama. I had nobody there but my dear beloved mama. The only women there wherever cared and always shared hugs and lots of love from up above when I was scared and when my heart was torn by that one deceiving girl, my mom was there first. She made me feel on top of the world because the world was truly mine in my mama's lovely eyes. Honestly and truthfully she never tell me lies.

Locked up inside my cell I had a lot of time to think. Why not listen to my mama when she told me not to drink? So, coming from my heart, mom I promise you to do whatever is needed and whatever pleases you.

-Thinking Seriously

From The Beat: We admire your love and respect for your mother. We all make mistakes and we all let down our parents. That's part of growing up but eventually we have to grow up and listen up and refuse to make mistakes. We learned to use our mind to picture a scene and to play out the consequences beforehand.

I Finally Wrote

Every week The Beat comes after me ,looking for someone talented like me, but I finally got the chance to write them because I'm always busy. It's my 11th month being locked up and it feels like I'm never going to get out.

I just don't care anymore but I am going to because the charges ain't no joke.

Now The Beat is here and I'm finally writing. It feels cool to express myself through writing. I'm going to get back. I'll talk to you later.

-E-Clone

From The Beat: We are glad you finally took up the pencil and wrote some things down. Keep your head up and keep hope alive.

Hella Mad

I'm hella mad because I went to court today for trial and they got me mad. They didn't want to drop my felony. That's BS! Now I have to go back and if they get me mad again, I'm going to mess up. Hope I don't get that strike and have to go to camp!

-Ruiz

From The Beat: You have every right to feel frustrated and upset, and we're glad you're expressing your anger through words rather than with fists. Whatever the outcome for you, we hope you don't do anything that could jeopardize your future and keep you locked up for good. Be smart and think about it. Remember your role in this situation you are in.

Self-Expressing Artist

I've always been a person who keeps to myself and never talks about my feelings. Maybe that's why I'm always so mad. I never liked to express myself. Then I found a way to express myself. But that got me into trouble.

I loved what I was doing. I was expressing myself and I felt better. I loved it! I was expressing myself through graffiti art. I wasn't doing it in public places, but where I was doing it was still illegal. I got caught. I am a self-expressing artist and for expressing myself, I got locked up.

-Christian

From The Beat: Art is a beautiful, soulful form of expression, and to have found that you can express yourself through it is an amazing feeling, whether it's watercolor painting or graffiti art. It's too bad that graffiti art isn't recognized by the mainstream; instead, most people consider it an eyesore. Maybe when you get out, you should connect with a local youth arts group to see if there are public walls for graffiti art. Keep using your art to tell your story and express your joys and pains. We'd love to feature your work in The Beat!

Plans for 2009

The topic is what my plans are when I get out. Let me introduce myself. They call me Lil' E and I stay in the city of Fresno. My plans when I get out is to kick it with some homies I met right here in the hall. We're going to go cruising in a car around the hood. I'm going to hit up some girls so we can kick it and pop some thizz pills. Then we are going to go buy Little Caesar's, like three boxes of pizza for the munchies. We're only going to get down with the fools who are trippin' on us. That what I am going to do when I get back on the streets. To all out there doing time, do your time, don't let the time do you. Lil' E is gone!

-Lil' E

From The Beat: Good to hear from you, Lil' E, yes we changed up your name for the protection of the program. We apologize. Now, regarding your piece... It sounds like your plans for when you get out are to have fun and kick it. How long do you think it will be before you end up back in JJC again? What about finding ways to be successful and productive? Sorry if it sounds like a lecture, not trying to, but we're just worried about you and don't want you to end up in JJC again.

Home Away From Home

Hey, it's your boy again, CherryAce. My life story could fill up a few books that's how bad and frustrated it is.

I've been in trouble with the law since I was about 5 years old. But they didn't lock me up until I was about 10.

When I was in Iowa with my dad I got locked up for six years straight. I am 17 now and I am going on 18 so I have been in this system for about 8 years. But, if you count since I was 5, I have been in the system for going on 13 years.

If I get out in 2009 I am going to put my trust and my life and my faith in the one person who's been there for me besides my mom. That person is the Lord, my God.

It says in the bible that He made us how He wanted to be and everyday is a test to me. I know that I can do right but I chose not to do it. So now I live life to the fullest. So I leave this thought with you that no matter how many people say stuff about you, don't let it get you down but smile back and let it make you a better person. Ya boy.

-CherryAce

From The Beat: Thank you for your honest sharing. We wish you the best of luck and growth in your recovery and we wish everyone. This is not a place to return to. Do your best to never return here.

Just Me

I want to do right but I can't, I don't know why.

I want to do things that I am not supposed to do but I do it anyways because I don't care.

I come from the streets, but now I am locked up for stupid crap

so all I have to do is do what I have to do.

Besides I ain't got nothing to lose.

I ain't going to lie. I like drinking brew.

I do a lot of illegal stuff.

It's not good but I'll learn the hard way.

But if you want to find me, I'll be on the streets.

-Angel

From The Beat: So you don't think you've learned your lesson yet? What do you think it takes for a person to want to turn his life around? Perhaps losing someone close or experiencing a life changing event? It sounds like you do want to change your life for the better (who doesn't?) but you just need the support to take the first step. We encourage you to find someone in your life who is doing something positive, and ask that person to help you. We encourage you to stay in school, finish your education. You say you don't care, but in order to change, you have to care.

My Hefe And My Hefeta

My hefeta and hefe are really cool people. They've been there for me since I got locked up and they never stepped away. But now my hefe is going to have surgery and I might not be there when it happens. Right now I'm just hoping that I can get out so I can be there. I need to be there for my hefeta and my sisters.

-Listo

From The Beat: We're assuming these people are your aunt/uncle, grandma/grandpa, some type of family member, correct? It's funny that when you get locked up, you start to realize who will stick it out for you and be there when you need them. You're lucky to have these people in your life, and we hope you can be there for the surgery.

The Love of my Life

To the loves of my life, Salinda and DiMareea. I love them so much. They're the love of my life. They're the reason why I stay strong even though I'm locked up because if it wasn't for them I would probably go crazy. I just want to say I love you Salina and Dimareea and Daddy can't wait to touch down so I can spend time with you. Much love.

-D. Boy

From The Beat: That's great that you have so much love but we always remember that people are flawed. No one is perfect and eventually everyone fails. We can't rely on them and have to find solace and support with ourselves.

The Hood

Growing up was hard, living the life on the Boulevard. Gangsters all around my hood so you don't want no stuff to start.

I'm on my own. Smoke up in my dome.

Trying to find my way to the center of my road.

I got enemies to the right. My friends to the left.

Steady watching steps to avoid early death.

Organized crime was the way we lived our life.

The hood we called the Boulevard and Boulevard's our life.

When I'm locked up, the block is on my mind so when I hit the streets I'll avoid me doing time.

No matter where I live, I'll make sure it's understood.

I'm repping what I'm repping and what I'm repping is my hood.

-Mango

From The Beat: If you're so focused on repping your hood, it seems like it'll be hard to avoid doing time, as you say in your rhyme. Do you think there's a contradiction? We bring attention to the rest of the world: the rest of California or the United States, the Grand Canyon or Yosemite? Sounds like all you can see is the Hood, and that's ashame.

Sorry Mom

The thing that matters to me most is my mom. We can get along all the time and I love her to death, but I feel like I am a failure to her. I realize it kills her to know I am in here for the second, yet I still pray that her emotions are alright. I wonder, if I really love her, then why do I do this to her when she would do everything and anything for me?

At times, I feel that no matter how hard I try, I always end up back with the same people doing the same things. I can't do this to her anymore because now it's hurting me.

-Zach

From The Beat: Would it be too much to ask you to hang out with different people instead—for your mom's sake? Maybe that's the answer to your problem here. We encourage you to surround yourself with people who are doing positive things in their lives, and before you know it, that positive feeling will rub on off on you too.

Doomed?

What matter for me, to me is my freedom and to live a long and good life and money. Sometimes I stop and think where I'm headed and I'm doomed.

I know where I'm headed, it's to the pen--but I got choices. You must make stupid to keep like this way and my pride is something that is all so important. Sometime when people call me out it's hard not to answer them. I got to do what I got to do. I don't blame no one for my mistake. I try to do what I got to do.

-Juan

From The Beat: If your pride is all so important, let it push you to have a good life, a family, working a decent job. Pride is cheap that just answers to punks! You DO have choices, make them! Don't go to the pen, what a waste, this is your life!

Locked Up

I am locked up 'cause my mom wants me, she told me she didn't want me back. My dad wants me to go to Fouts even though he don't know what it is... that's why family aint important to me and the only thing I give a damn about is money, money, money, money, money and there aint nothing else that matters.

-Money guy

From The Beat: It sounds like everyone in your family is upset. Money is important, no doubt--suppose for a minute your needs were taken care of, then what would you think was important to you?

To The One I Will Never Forget

The warmth of your touch against my skin, the way you hold my waist, the way your fingers intertwine with mine, your passionate kiss, the way you pull me close, the way you whisper things in my ear.

I need you to love me, love me endlessly!

I need you to hold me, hold me close baby!

The way you look at me, your smile your laughter! The way you gaze into my eyes. The sound of your voice brightens my day, the way you say goodbye.

I want you not anyone else!

I want you to be my everything!

The phone calls at two in the morning. How you apologized for waking me up. How you always supported me. The arguments, that never last more than 10 minutes, the expression on your face when you got mad. The play fights we had. How almost every where you went someone knew you. How you were always there when I needed you the most. How you somehow always made everything seem alright.

I need you, now more than ever!

I want you, now by my side!

I want to feel your touch, I want you to hold me tight, I need you to comfort me in times of trouble. How you always promised to be around. Where are you? Come back! I can't do this without you! How come you're not here? Why did you leave? The phone calls, the tears strolling down my face, the pain the anger and hatred, the suffering and mourning, people pointing fingers at people.

Why couldn't it have been someone else? Why did god take you? I know you're in a better safer place now, but I wish you were still here with me. I love you and miss you terribly. We all do! You will never be forgotten! Rest In Peace James.

-Li' Skittles

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, which you eloquently describe in this tribute. How are you dealing with this loss in your life? Do you have any help? How would he tell you to go forward with your life if he could?

Why couldn't it have been someone else? Why did god take you? I know you're in a better safer place now, but I wish you were still here with me.

Untitled

Hello: What's up with it Beat, man what's up, I'm chilling right now keeping it lit right now holding it down me and my boy down right now, but it aint shhh we go be back to the hood asap.

I'm just gonna do cool and get my money the best way I can so if that me hit a lick, that's what it is. I'm trying to get up out of here. I been down for five months, and I just got kicked out of Fouts, and I don't know what's finna happen, I'm just hoping for the best.

-Mille

From The Beat: You got kicked out of Fouts, but don't give up. How about a job? We're convinced you could do it if you decided you could. You'd probably feel better about yourself, and sense what your true possibilities are. You don't want to just go from institution to institution do you?

Cool Year

What's good Beat, well I aint got anything to talk about. 2008 was the worst year ever, because I've been locked up all this year. Well 2009 is going to be cool. I get out in March, well anyways Beat I'm gone.

-Young Goofy

From The Beat: We agree 2009 is going to be cool, all kinds of people are feeling the vibe of people trying to help each other out, and everyone not being only out for themselves. What's your plan for your life in 2009?

Next Year

Next year I have hopes to do better in life. That's not saying much though. I hope to finally get done with school. Also I hope to get some stuff straight with my family. Most of all I wanna stay free and keep it on a real level with all the people in my life. I'm gonna try my hardest to put myself first this year also.

-Skid

From The Beat: We think what you said about how you hope to do better is a lot. What you're aiming for is crucial, respecting yourself, getting your education, and getting right with your family. Happy New Year.

What Matters

I think that what matters to me most is my pops and my baby mama, she not just that but she a down friend, ever since I've been in here she's been putting money on my phone and writing me constantly.

I feel like when I get out she gonna also help me get back on my feet. I feel like when I got out she gonna be my solid friend. Even though I got a feeling she sneaky while I'm here it's alright, because I can't control nothing while I'm in here that's the game called jail. When I get out that's going to be a different story.

-Weez

From The Beat: It sounds like you are very important in your baby mama's life (and your babies'). It's great to have someone in your corner like that. Good luck with this relationship, your child will always depend on you having a good relationship with the mama. Good luck with your pops too.

What Matters

Making my family proud aint important to me because you don't get nothing but making money does means something. You don't need for people to be proud of you, money you need in order to live if you didn't have money you couldn't eat or nothing.

That's why people do crimes in order to get money faster. If you run out then you will be smellin' like piss sittin' in front of Safeway all day you would be homeless. When you're homeless sittin outside all day you might well be dead because you won't have nothing to live for. You better start committin' crimes or something. Homeless people that don't commit crimes just sit beg and walk.

I don't want to be homeless I might as well be dead so I'm going to stack as much money as I can so that will never happen get a job rob steal whatever it takes.

-L

From The Beat: It is scary to imagine being homeless. Many people who are homeless have other issues as well, and most aren't young and capable of making necessary changes. We hope you have support so that all your survival needs aren't up to you by yourself. The idea is that while you are under eighteen people help you so you can focus on your education.

Stress Test

Why these fools trying to test me stress me, don't they recognize it's nothing new when it comes to deafening my title. My block is what matters and my homeboys. Start dis respecting we having problems. What goes on in my town stays in my town. I'm from Vacaville it's real out there. Crime scenes everyday, I'm going crazy in my mind think what's going on. I should be in my town mobbing around. Don't like to mess around.

You can talk the funk but you ain't ready to chunk 'em. You could see me today tomorrow or next year nothing changes with me. I don't back down I stand tall. Never givin' up on my life style. This is what it was meant to be, don't want nothing fancy. Just the boys loyalty. No change just the same person since 7th grade.

Ain't in it for the fame, just who I am born and raised. You can send me to jail but I'm not going to frown, proud to be who I am. Hope my mama understands. I'm about to bounce, to all stand tall we never falling.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: When you say you hope your Mama understands what do you mean? Do you hope she understands that you have put your block before your own life, freedom, her needs and your future? How could she understand that? We don't think she'd agree that you should give up everything for the block.

Do Better

What's up Beat only got five more days then I get to go home. So this will be my last entry. This year kinda sucked because either I was locked up or on the run. It all started last January.

I had court that day never went because I knew I was going to jail. So I was on the run until April. Judge sent me to a program. Then I was so close of getting released then I ran in August, was on the run again until September. Judge sent me back to New Founds now it's December and I got five days left.

Hopefully I get out of this place and do better. I have a plan so maybe that will work well. Good luck to me I'm out late.

-Josh

From The Beat: Good luck with your plans! Stay free!

The Movement

What's up Beat, I've been incarcerated for almost all year, short by like 2 months and 17 days. Anyway I haven't learned much, but I have matured in many ways. I've become more responsible too, I think. Hopefully 2009 will suit me better than 08 has. If it don't then rock bottom here I come, but the way I got it planned I'm be up in the clouds lookin' down rock bottom.

-Ali

From The Beat: What are your plans? You talk about being in the clouds, or at rock bottom. Would somewhere between be okay too? So high and so low makes for drama...

My Block

It's ya boy boy Rell ya feel me what matters to me is my hood. My hood mean so much to me because every time it's funk or somebody want my head my boys is right there ready for whatever.

If they wasn't there when these haters caught me slippin I would be dead right now, they was there when I got dumped and all that other kind of shh so my job is to make sho I'm there for them and I'm there when haters want they head and to make sho they is safe.

-Young Rell

From The Beat: How are you going to go to college and do this at the same time? Wasn't that you that said you wanted to be somebody in life? We appreciate that you're there for each other, but maybe you could support each other in other ways—by backing up each other up to go to college, get jobs, work on having good futures.

2008

I hate 2008 because I've been locked up for most of it. I'm just trying to forget about it and just focus on 2009 because I'm going to be out in January so that's it. I don't know what else to write.

I wish I was out of New-Founds because they always telling me to cut my hair and stuff so they made it a rule that I can't wear anything in my hair. So I can't wait till I get out so I put it back in a tail.

-Focus on '09

From The Beat: What can you focus on that's good for 2009? What are your plans to make this year better than the last?

Hopefully 2009 will suit me better than 08 has. If it don't then rock bottom here I come, but the way I got it planned I'm be up in the clouds lookin' down rock bottom.

On Blocks

You could find me in my hood where I get money. My cuddies don't play when it come down to doe. We get ours any way we can. I don't want to work. I rather get money the easy way.

-Young Cutt

From The Beat: Is it so easy doing time? If you counted all the time you have to do for the money, does it still pay? Would you like to work if you got to do something you like to do? What if you could do something interesting, then it's not so much like work, but a good way to live and feel good about yourself? You have to believe you could have a good life, you don't have to live in jail.

It's A Cold Game

What's good Beat. I'm writing about what I learned new this year. I learned that this year I've been in and out of jail shh aint for me. All through this year I been in and out of jail.

I missed a lot of birthdays, including my own, holiday's, etc. My family is one of the most important things that I'm grateful for, and I've turned my back on them. I've been trinna move too fast and get all this shh that I don't need or deserve. I not only messed up their year, but I also messed up their lives in a way.

Hopefully it's not too late to fix it 'cause I don't want none of ma lil bras to go through all this stupid stuff. I was just trinna get money by hitting lics. At first it was all good for me, I was making mad money non-stop. Until I got too greedy and started slippin'. I wasn't thinking about the families I was scarin', but in the end look where it got me. Locked up, and on top of all that I racked up a huge bill for ma parents to pay.

I don't think it was worth all this cause really in the end it was just a waste of valuable time. I'm ayounge teen and been to the hall 7 times fo' all the same shh. I'm done with all that bullshh now though. I've accepted Christ into my life and I've been "reborn".

And all you new comers into this game. I advise you to get out now cause it's a cold game and all you can do is lose or die. Stop now! Well I'm gone be out right about now so, until next time...

-Rob

From The Beat: It's good you've decided to stop, it doesn't sound like it's been a good road for anyone...or that it was going anywhere good. You're fourteen! You have plenty of time to really get your life together with the support of your family. We wish you well! Don't forget what you learned!

Murmur Change

Forever we can thrive on pleasure and love, for ourselves and the people we care for. We shouldn't care for anybody but us. "just keep your eyes to yourself" I want to scream it sometimes. Scream and kick and shout the truth of my feelings, that's what I want to do.

But trouble won't get us anywhere. Expect the silence of our voices to be until freedom comes. After they let us out their watchful, oppressive eyes we can live and do as we please. Until our release dates we just have to stay down. And scream at the eyes of oppression inside our heads. Quick glances, and smiles and smirks can support our reason to be. The outside world is waiting for us, we just need to get there. I love you!

-Murmur

From The Beat: Don't every forget what it meant to you to lose your freedom, and stay free to love and live your life!

2009 Is Coming

See me I be on some whole other shhh. This is what I'm about to do for this year's coming, I'm bouta get a job when I leave this peace after that, I'm going to be with a honey bun trying to have a cool relationship with her but I'm still finna be on the block.

After I get a couple of chips I'm about to stack my money and get my a cool little benz. This is only the beginning of my life I'm still not done with my conflicts.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: We're glad you want to work on having a good relationship, the rest sounds like the same old same old to us. What will it take for you to be done? You've been in NF for awhile... We edited the glorifying.

Mr. Wells

He is a staff in the Founds and ya feel me he be telling me stuff that can really help me out. He be talking to me when I'm feeling down and he treat me like I'm his child.

He is about to take me on a field trip to a college because he knows that I can make it in life and be somebody and that's the staff I care about.

-Young Rell

From The Beat: We love to hear about people really taking interest in your life and future, and walking what they talk. You can be somebody in life, and it helps you believe in yourself when you have support and encouragement.

Eggs In A Basket

What it do Beat? I walk among the lonely... All I know is don't put all your eggs in one basket. When I say that I mean don't get your hopes up on one thing. Don't depend on just one thing you gotta realize if you put all your eggs in one basket you're setting yourself up for failure, you're gonna fall and everything in that basket is going to break you down.

Live life to the fullest, make sure you doing what you gotta do, live it with being able to have a choice, live it out so when you older you could look back and laugh and say "damn I was a knuckle head."

Another thing don't let someone or anyone have control of your feelings because they gone take advantage and abuse the good you got to offer. My towns got problems like it got baby mamas in Hondas! Out of here five more days!

-Remy

From The Beat: We like your advice, especially the part about living your life so that you have a choice. Sometimes we think we have to do things, when actually we do have a choice. We hope you got a job and are doing well!

What Matters to Me

What matters to me is my family, my money, my freedom. It don't matter more making money than making my mom proud because money comes and goes but a mom goes and don't come back.

Respect does matter to me more than my freedom because if you don't have any respect for yourself you have a low-self esteem.

-Trouble

From The Beat: We agree it's so important to have respect for yourself, to have your priorities are in line with what is truly most important, like family. We hope you never have to choose between self respect and freedom, that you never feel any action that would take your freedom really respects your life.

Still Strong

What matters most to me. My God, my brother, my patnas, and my money are what matter most to me. I love god, I love my brother and my patnas and 24 hours of the day I'm trying to get my money. My brother is my father and my patnas are my brothers. I love my god. He has taken me through a lot but I'm still strong.

I need my money, I gotta eat. I don't a job until I finish school so I can finish on time. I love my city Richmond and that is a factor in my life. I love my patnas, they ride for me at all times, but I only have a few 'cause there's not too many real ones out there. I'm gone...

-Marrea

From The Beat: We edited some...not to glorify illegal activity. We appreciate that you want to finish school on time, and realize you need to eat—however we think you should ask for help figuring out how you can accomplish this without risking your freedom and future.

She Matters

Lady. Basically all I'm focused on is education, a job, and my lady. She really means a lot to me. I would hate to lose her. I've never really felt this way about a girl.

She brings me up when I'm down. Keeps me outta trouble. It's like she's my motivation to move forward. I'm tryna keep her. I been with her for like two and half months. To me it feels like some years. It's like I'm in love. I aint afraid of it. She loves me and I love her. Ninjas didn't know mobstas fall in love.

I'mma be buyin her stuff and treatin her like a queen she is. I really wanna do something special for Christmas. Like plies said "it aint trickin if you got it." She's been keeping me on track, she from Richmond. I thought we was gone be bumpin heads. But she really, really, a sweet heart. And I love her. Not too thick, not too skinny. She makes me feel so good.

I use to be just missin with hecka girls. Now I'm stuck to just one girl. At first I was thinking about messin around but then something changed my mind. Cause I realized I have someone special. She don't mess with nobody but me. She listen when I tell her to do something. And she respects me as a person. That's all I really need. Aint trust me she aint broke.

She's my girlfriend. I actually got feelings for her. I know she feels the same way. But anyway, I'mma try and stick with her as long as possible. Everybody telling me to wife her. I'mma take they advice. If it ever come down to it, I'll fight for her. We gone make this happen just me and her. Hopefully she be the one to give my kids. I love her.

-Curious George

From The Beat: Good luck with this relationship. Mutual respect is important. How's it going now?

Living My Life

Livin my life can't wait to get out of the system so I can live my life and not do wrong never come back to a place like new founds this is not the place that I want to live my life I want to be free and do what ever it is that I have to do to stay away from any body's jail because I hate for people to tell me when I eat and sleep I want to be home so do what I want when I want and leave when I want to so I don't have to push a button to tell someone that you have to use the rest room.

How I will stay away from being in jail is staying at home being with my child and takin care of my baby's mother because that is the woman that I love.

-Tickei

From The Beat: Everyday remember your commitment to your freedom! Your family needs you. Take care.

What Matters to Me

What matters to me is my family, my money, my freedom. It don't matter more making money than making my mom proud because money comes and goes but a mom goes and don't come back.

Respect does matter to me more than my freedom because if you don't have any respect for yourself you have a low-self esteem.

-Trouble

From The Beat: We agree it's so important to have respect for yourself, to have your priorities are in line with what is truly most important, like family. We hope you never have to choose between self respect and freedom, that you never feel any action that would take your freedom really respects your life.

My Own Man

What's up with the Beat? Well today I'm going to write what matter to me. What matter to me is my freedom because once it's taken away you're told when to eat when to shower and what do I hate that I don't like it when people tell me what to do if it aint my parents.

But yup that's why my freedom matters to me. And also what matters to me is my family and true friends because they're always there when you need them. Well Beat that's all for today till next time.

-My Own Man

From The Beat: It's important to remember when you are released how much your freedom matters to you, so that you make decisions that keep you out of jail!

Does It Matter

I am not going to be home for two Christmases. Does it matter, help myself first, or get out and not change. It does matter about missing Christmas. I could be home with my family, but instead I chose to be selfish and get in trouble.

-Tyler aka Puppychow

From The Beat: Apparently it does matter to you, though maybe you haven't been successful lately at remembering how much your freedom matters at moments when other choices present themselves. It helps to write or read or do something everyday that reminds you about what you value most...

Reach

My family means more to me than any thing because with out yo fam bam you cant reach fo any thing in the world without them you wouldn't have nothing in this life that's why they matter to me.

-Marky D

From The Beat: We're sure your family wants you to be happy and healthy and live out your potential.

Follow The Rules

All I really have to say is to make the best of it while we're here just do your program and follow the rules so you don't have to be down in your room that's all though, bye.

-Generous

From The Beat: We appreciate that you're wishing others well. That's a great quality, caring about how others are doing. How are you?

It Matters

What matters to me is my family. I say that because they did all they can to make me happy and they really mean a lot to me. I would never do anything to hurt them because they always been there for me.

There's a lot of people in this world that would be against you and believe that your family wouldn't be one of them. I didn't learn how much they really love me till recently. I know that they did but it's hard to understand when they want me to learn my lesson the hard way.

It's okay because now I know from right and wrong, so I really gonna try my best to do better to make my family proud.

-Chow-main

From The Beat: We don't know how old you are but we do think it's better for you to learn what you need to now, before you get any older or anything gets more serious. We're glad your family really wants what's best for you.

Things I Want Changed By The President

The most important thing I'll want to see Obama change is to let teens stop going to school, from ages 17 and up, without having anyone on your back.

Something I wish he could change is to make weed legalized or something. And he can change hospitals, having more blood donations, cars for the sick, and pharmacies. So those are the things I need changed, Obama.

-Meechee

From The Beat: Some of the things you're talking about sound good, and some of them sound like they'll only make your life easier in the short term. Will dropping out of school and being able to smoke weed freely help you with your long term goals? Don't hesitate to dream big. Think about large-scale changes. In your life, and for the country.

"Change" Is A Powerful Word

First I would say to Obama, change is a powerful word. It takes time and a motivating force.

Example, look at our forefathers like Benjamin Franklin. He was willing to teach people and leave strong influences on others, and have a positive life. Not only people that you can look up to, but people that you can depend on.

Obama, change the way life is for the middle and lower class.

I thank you Obama for lowering the gas prices and stopping the war. Now that we changed one situation we can look at the situations that need work, like changing schools for the better, healthcare for the people, better opportunities, better jobs, more college funds.

-Broderick

From The Beat: Thanks for writing, Broderick. We like the point you made that it's about more than being able to look up to someone. It's about being able to depend on them too. What role do we play in contributing to these changes?

Help The Poor

If I was talking to Obama I would ask if he's going to change the healthcare system and help out the poor more so they can feel how it is to be on top, and all that.

-Tracey

From The Beat: Thanks for writing, Tracey. What's the best way to help the poor get there? Is money all that's needed? What type of program and support would you like to see?

The Economy

I think that the real thing that Obama will try to change is the economy. The reason I say that is because this world revolves around money no matter what.

The rest of the things he needs to change are legalizing weed, and giving good healthcare for young and older people. If they say he's going to make our dreams come true, I hope they are not selling dreams. But I have faith that he will change most of our problems.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Mike, we like that you're thinking about the issues. It's good to have a balance of faith and skepticism, and it sounds like you do. How can you help to hold our president accountable, to make sure that he's not, "selling dreams"?

Life is Short

Telling a story about my life,

It's good so far, I wish I could live it twice.

One day I would leave and come back as another,

I also wish I could have the same mother.

Life is short so enjoy what's left,

I'm gonna have fun until my last breath.

I want to live forever, in time I will see,

I'm just tellin' you what life means to me.

Love and live life until I'm dead,

I hope I don't go with a shot to the head.

Walkin' on earth is really a pleasure

It's tough right now, I wish it was better

Even though we have a black president

I wonder will he lower the prices for rent

Change we can is what he said,

But where I'm from change can announce you're dead

I never want to die but there's no telling when

My life is fun I wish I could live it again

But when will I go is the big question

I'm not sure about god so I have no blessing

I don't want to die like Backyard on Saturday night

But until that day I'm going to live my life.

LB

From The Beat: And what is the plan to living your life? You deliver a stellar piece of writing. This hits! Keep pitching your stories and poems, this Beat community needs to hear from you!

No Change For Me

Ain't no change for me. Because the only way I can change is if I want to change.

-Mike

From the Beat: Mike, you're absolutely right. Many people never thought they'd see this day, when a Black man was elected President of the United States. Does that motivate you at all? Try to find inspiration in the things happening around you. If you decide to pursue change, you never know what's possible.

I Believe In Miracles

I believe in a miracle

Be all u can be

Up in DC

-Samuelle

From The Beat: Some would say what we've witnessed this election is a miracle. What's the next one we should believe in? What can Obama bring to DC?

Dinner With The President

If I had dinner with Barack Obama and he asked me what change I would like to see, I would say Title 16, and ask him can he put more sports and educational programs in more neighborhoods.

Title 16 means youth getting charged as adults. Getting sent to the adult jails as a youth, and you ain't learning nothing and the government forgets about you and keeps it moving, while you're getting sentenced to more years than your age.

-Gucci

From The Beat: You make a powerful point. Young people aren't being helped in the adult system, and there's something strange about being sentenced to more years of life in jail than you've even lived. How can you start to draw more attention to this issue? Make sure you find ways to make your voice and your concerns heard. Keep writing.

If I had dinner with Barack Obama and he asked me what change I would like to see, I would say Title 16, and ask him can he put more sports and educational programs in more neighborhoods.

It's Good

It's good that a black man is in the chair but he's not going to do nothing for me. We need more programs for the youth, and we need to change how once you're in the system, you're going to be in the system repeatedly.

-Jamaica

From The Beat: What kind of programs do the youth need? And how does one navigate out of the system?

Change Your Life

And be a star
Make your money,
Drive nice cars
Don't do dirt,
Stay fresh and clean
Change negative ways
To positive things

-Tray

From The Beat: We like the rhyme, Tray. It's hopeful. Where does change begin for you, in your life? Figure out the plan to bring this rhyme into reality.

*now there not near
to feel my tears and to feel my fears
run down my back to my legs*

Ugh, Christmas...

Christmas was here the worst time of the year.
When all the people have cheer
but the people left me in here.
They are all gone but were so dear,
but now there not near
to feel my tears and to feel my fears
run down my back to my legs.
That is 'whack 'cause you're not near
but I feel your fears.
Christmas was here but not so near
because the people that were dear left me in here.

- Shawnta

From The Beat: It is sad to hear that you were locked up during the Christmas holidays, but you must remember it was not "the people that were dear" to you that put you in there. By your choice and your action alone put you where you are now, and don't forget to think of the pain the ones that care about you are in.

Yes We Can

I do believe Barack Obama is goin' to come through with his changes. I think he can, some people call him the Anti-Christ, but I call him a new life, a new hope.

- Margarita

From The Beat: Many feel strongly about both values you mentioned, but now, all we can do is wait and see what happens.

One Year Old, One Year Wiser

One year older one year wiser
do you want to end up in the pen, and be a fighter?
Look at me
my times not even half way through.
What's wrong with you?
You say you're a 'G' but you're just going to end up in cell
getting locked up is not being a 'G'.
You need to grow up get wise; life is very short
all you have to do is look at someone like me.

- Iyesha

From The Beat: Very good advise Iyesha, we at The Beat also hope that with another year gone by you have gotten wiser, and will make better choices in your life. Life is so short to waste it locked up.

Quisiera Cambiar

La vida en la juvenile es shhh. Yo sé que solo estamos complaciendo al juez y a mi PO. Es verdad que no cambias ni puedes cambiar de un día a otro.

Yo haría todo lo posible por cambiar todo. No temería a nada porque tú solo te metes en problemas y solo tienes que salir de ellos. Yo estoy aquí solo por defender a mi primo. Los dos estamos aquí. La neta es que quiero cambiar. Voy a cambiar y va a ser por las personas que más me important-mi familia y mi novia.

Yo estoy aprendiendo de esta lección que estoy pasando ya que nunca había caído a una cárcel. Hoy ya estoy aprendiendo lo que es estar preso en una cárcel. Lo estoy viendo por mí mismo y no por consejos de otras personas.

Yo sé que voy a cambiar y primeramente Dios voy a salir de aquí. Pues si les digo a todos los homies que vivan la vida minuto a minuto y van a encontrar un motivo por el cual conducirse a la forma correcta. Piensenlo dos veces antes que después sea demaciado tarde.

Mírame a mí extrañando a mi vida, a mi familia y a mi novia y todo por una estupidez. Voy a estar aquí por 6 meses.

Con la ayuda de Dios, pronto voy a salir para cumplir mi sueños que son estar con mi madre de mi hijo y terminar la escuela y tener un bien trabajo para salir adelante.

Saludos a los homies.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tus palabras de cambiar se hagan realidad. Todo depende de ti. Ya sabes lo que es estar preso que piensas hacer? ¿Que quieres decir con "vivir la vida minuto a minuto?" Tienes planes y familia esperando por ti, no lo hagas esperar.

I Wish To Change

Life in juvenile hall is shhh. I know we are just satisfying the judge and my PO. It's true that you can't change from one day to another.

I would do whatever is possible to change. I don't fear anything. You're the only one who gets yourself into trouble and you're the only one that can get rid of them. I'm here for defending my cousin. We both are here. The truth is that I want to change. I am going to change and I'm going to do it to the people who are more important to me—my family and girl.

I am learning from this lesson that I am going through given the fact that I have never been in jail. Now I am learning what it is to be in a jail, what I'm going through and all for not taking the advices of others.

I know I am going to change and hopefully God I am going to get out of here. I'm saying to my friends to live their lives minute by minute and you will find a purpose that will guide you to the right way. Think about it twice before it's too late.

Look where I am missing my girl, my family and my girl and all over a dumb thing. I am going to be here for six months.

With the help of God, I'm going to get out of here to make my dreams come true that to be with my mother, be with my son, finish school, and get a job to succeed. My greetings to all.

-Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope your words of changing come true. Everything depends on you. You know what it is to be in jail. What do you plan to do now? What do you mean by "to live your life minute by minute?" You have plans and a family waiting for you, don't make them wait.

Como Cambio Mi Vida

Yo les quiero contra la historia del Flaco. Me vine de Honduras con la intención de venir a coronarla, pero tenía que trabajar mucho para eso. Luego me ajunté con unos vatos y esos vatos estaban locos. Ellos vendían piedras y me dijeron que podía ganar mucha feria y así fue. A los días, andaba las bolsas hasta la madre llenas de feria y muchas rucas.

Empece a agarrar vicios, fumaba cigarros, solo me gustaban los Malboros, tomaba, coquiaba, y lo que más me gustó fue la mota.

Ahora soy una persona muy sentrada y nomas en vez en cuando me hecho un toque. Tengo menos vicios y me preocupo por mi vida, y por mi familia. Pienso que he tratado de llebarme mejor con todos.

From The Beat: ¿Pero de que te sirve estar un poco calmado si todavía haces lo mismo? Lo bueno es que poco a poco ya vas mejorando tu forma de pensar. Ya te distes cuenta a donde te lleban los amigos malos. Deberías de alejarte de ellos y buscar amigos que realmente te ayuden a ver la vida diferente a la que estas viviendo. Vas por buen camino, sigue en ese camino.

How My Life Changed

I want to change the story of Flaco. I came from Honduras with the intentions of success, but I had to wok hard in order to make that happen. Later, I started to hang with some guys who were crazy. They used to sell crack cocaine and they tell me that by selling I would gain a lot of money. It happened just like they said. Days later, I had my pockets full of money and I had a lot of girls.

I started to get bad habits, smoke cigarettes, I would only smoke Marlboro, drink, use cocaine, and what I like the best was weed.

Now I am a more mature person and I hit some weed once a while. I have less bad habits and I care about my life and family.

I think I have made an effort to behave better with all.

-Lil' Flaco, San Francisco

From The Beat: What good is it to be a little calm but still being involved in the mix? The good thing is that you are getting fixing your way of being little by little. Have you realized where your friends have taken you? You should try a way to get away from them and find friends who can really help your life to be a different one than the one you are living. But, you are on the right road, keep on walking that road.

Me Siento Mal

Me siento mal porque nunca he estado en una cárcel y me siento mal porque yo quiero salir de aquí. Este 8 de Diciembre tube mi corte, pero no se hizo nada.

En la otra corte, espero que gane porque yo no aguanto más estando aquí en este lugar.

Tengo que aguantar hasta que yo salga. Espero ganar mi casa y salir de aquí.

From The Beat: Esperamos y salgas de aquí y aprendas de esta experiencia.

I Feel Bad

I feel bad because I've been I have never been in a jail before and I feel bad because I want to get out of here. This December 8th I had court, but nothing happened.

In the next court, I'm hoping to win it because I can't handle being in this place.

I have to handle it until I get out. I hope to win and go back home.

-Vela, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you get out of here and learn from your experience.

Cuando Me Entierren

Cuando me entierren en el cementerio, quiero que me hagan un favor. Yo quiero que me tiren agua bendita, y que me entierren al lado de mi abuela. Yo quiero que mi familia no llore y que las rucas tampoco lloren por mí porque voy a estar en el cielo con los angelitos.

From The Beat: ¿No crees que estas muy joven como para pensar en la muerte? Deberías estar pensando en tu futuro y lo que haras con tu vida.

When They Buried Me

When they buried me in the cemetery, I want you to do me a favor. I want you to spill some blessed water over me and be buried next to my grandmother. I don't want my family or the girls to cry over me because I am going to be in Heaven with the angels.

- Lil' M, Marin

From The Beat: Aren't you too young to be thinking about dying? You should be thinking about something else like your future and what you will do with your life.

Mi Vida En La Juvenile

Para mí es muy duro estar en la cárcel ya que es mi primera vez. Estoy pagando lo que no hice. A mí me acusan de vender droga, pero tengo la esperanza de salir de aqui libre de culpa.

Lo primero que yo voy a hacer al salir de aqui si no me deportan de aqui es aprender Inglés. Unas de mis metas es aprender idioma como el Ingles, Frances, Portugues, Epgicio, Japones y muchos más. Siempre lo que me propongo lo logro. Quiero superarme, y ser alguien en la vida.

En este pais tengo las posibilidades de lograr lo que quiero. En Honduras no voy a poder lograr lo que quiero.

Para mi mama: cuando pienso en ti, mis ojos ronpen en llanto porque no estan aqui. Te quiero tanto.

From The Beat: Esperamos que salgas si es que eres culpable. Dicen que entre más idiomas sepas, vales más. Ser una persona multilingual puede comunicarse con muchas personas de diferente paises y culturas. Es algo bueno de saber. Y tambien es bien pagado y puede obtener trabajo en cualquier lugar del mundo.

My Life In Juvenile Hall

To me is very hard to be in jail given the fact that this is my first time. I am paying over something I did. They are accusing me of dope dealing, but I have the hopes of getting out of here without any charges.

The first thing I am going to do when I get out of here if they don't deport me is to learn English. One of my goals is to learn languages such as English, French, Portuguese, Equips, Japanese, and others. When I propose to do something to myself, I always make it happen. I want to succeed and be someone in life.

In this country, I have the possibility of making what I want a reality. In Honduras, I'm not going to be able to do what I want.

For my mother: when I think of you, my eyes tear themselves into crying because you're not her. I love you.

-Victoria, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you get out if you're not guilty of charge. There is saying that states that the more languages you know, the more you are worth. Being a multilingual is being able to communicate with many other people from different countries and culture. It's something good to know. And the way, they get paid well and get a job anywhere in the world.

Aprendiendo Del Pasado

Pues, hoy estoy aqui pagando por mis malos actos y aprendiendo de unos de mis errores.

Al salir de aqui, trataré de hacer el bien y dejar el mal porque el mal trae muchos problemas. Por el mal es la razón por la cual estoy aqui y pienso que es mejor hacer el bien porque el bien trae buenas cosas las cuales se que va a dirigirme bien a la vida.

Gracias a Dios que yo pienso así.

From The Beat: No digas la palabra, "trataré." Dime mejor, que lo haras para que te sientas más vonvencibo de que haras algo. ¿Dinos por donde piensas comenzar? ¿Cuales son tus planes para mejorar?

Learning From The Past

Well, here I am paying for my bad actions and regretful over my mistakes.

When I get out of here, I'm going to try to do better and leave badness behind because it brings a lot of problems. Badness is the reason why I am here. I think is better to do the good because doing good things guide me to a better life.

Thank God I'm thinking like this.

-Alberto, San Francisco

From The Beat: Don't say the word, "I'm going to try." Say that you'll do it so you can feel more convinced that you would do it. So, tell us where would you start. What are your plans to better yourself?

Mi Novia

Les voy a contar mi historia. Bueno yo soy Hondureño y tengo una novia en San Francisco. Ella es una mujer muy especial y no a valore. Hay muchos jóvenes aqui que toman a la mujer como si fueran cualquier cosa. Las tartan mal y supuestamente eso lo hacen ser hombres.

Ahora mi novia me dió un hijo y tiene dos meses y yo aqui preso sin poder hacer nada. Me van a deportar y por eso les dijo a todos que cuiden a sus novias y a sus hijos. Me van a deportar, pero no te preocupes y solo pidele a Dios y pronto regresaremos.

From The Beat: Se tona que estas en una situación bien dura. Esto no quiere decir que todo ha terminado. Toma bien en serio y para tu conveniencia esta experiencia. Si llegas a volver, manten en mente lo que tienes aqui, a tu novia e hijo. Tienes que luchar mucho por ellos. Tienes que darle un padre a este hijo y la única forma como puedes hacer esto es portandonte bien.

My Girl

I'm going to share my story. Well, I am Honduran and I have a girl in San Francisco. She is a very special woman and I didn't value her as she is. There are many guys in here that treat woman as if they were things. They treat them wrong and that supposedly make them be more man.

Now she gave me a son and he is two months old and I am here without being able to do a thing. They are going to deport me and that's why I tell you all to take care of your girls and your kids. They are going to deport us, but don't worry, ask God and you will be back soon.

-Lil' Catracho, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's obvious that you find in a hard situation. This doesn't mean that everything has ended. Take everything this experience serious and for your convenience. If you get to come back, keep in mind what you have here—your girl and your kid. You have to fight hard to give this kid a father and the only way to do this is by behaving well.

I was in denial. I thought the things I was doing were fine, but now that I'm in here, I am regretful.

Mi Culpa

¡Un año más, un año menos! Bueno raza, pues les voy a contar otra experiencia de mi vida. La pura neta es que soy mariguanero. Mis dos carnales estan en la cárcel por mi culpa, pero no me aguito porque ellas van a salir pronto.

From The Beat: ¿Y te orgullece que tus hermanas hayan caído en la cárcel por tu culpa? De la forma como lo dice, das a entender como si no te importara.

My Guilt

One more year, one year less! Well, people, I am going to share another experience of my life. The truth is that I am a pot head. My brothers are in jail over me, but I don't worry because I know they are going to get out soon.

-Cholo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Are you proud that they are here over your mistakes? The way you said it, sounds like you don't care.

Mi Futuro En El 2009

Lo que a mí me importa es mi futuro y mi vida porque este año 2008 me la pase nomas haciendo cosas de lo normal.

Este año 2009, quiero cambiar porque lo que paso pasó. Ahora viene 1 tiempo de cambiar mi vida. Por eso quiero hecharles ganas.

Mi otro año 2008, fue puto tomar yu hacer pendejadas. Yo soy de los que les gusta tomar mucho y hacer cosas que no son normales.

Cuando llegue de Mexico, filerie a un guey porque queria molestar a mi jaina. Pues ya ven lo que pasó por borracho.

From The Beat: Se nota que tienes un gran problema con el alcohol. Deberias de buscar ayuda para dejar de tomar. Ya has visto a donde te ha llebado. Si no le pones más atención, te puede llebar a otro lugar peor que el que estas. ¿Estas orgulloso de lo que hicistes? ¿Te arrepientes?

My Future In 2009

What I care about is my future and my life because the year of 2008 I spent it doing things that common.

This year 2009 I want to change because what happened is gone. Now the time to change my life has arrived. That's why I want to make a big effort.

Last year 2008, I spent it drinking, and doing stupid things. I am one of those who like to drink a lot and do things that aren't normal.

When I came from Mexico, I stabbed someone because he wanted to bother my girl. And now you see what happened to me for being drunk. -Francisco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's obvious that you have a big problem with alcohol. You should find a wan to stop drinking. You've seen where this has taken you. If you don't pay some attention to this, it will take you to another place worse than this one. Are you proud of what you did? Do you regret it?

Lo Que Me Di Cuenta

Voy a tartar de obedecer a mis padres. Voy a tartar de evitar a mis amistades que la verdad no me han enseñado cosas buenas. Es mi primera vez que estoy en este lugar y nunca había estado aqui.

Ahora que sé como es este lugar, voy a tratar de cambiar y a apartarme de lo malo que en que andaba.

Estaba engñano. Pensaba que lo que hacía estaba bien, pero ahora que estoy aqui adentro, estoy arrepentido. Ahora que trato de refleccionar es muy tarde. Le pido a Dios que me de la oportunidad de salir de aqui. Ahorita cuando salga, le pido a Dios que me sea yo una nueva persona.

From The Beat: ¿Quien te dijo que es demaciado tarde? Ahorita es cuando todo lo bueno empieza para ti. Avesc tenemos que pasar por situaciones no deseadas para aprender la realidad de algunas cosas. Los errores que cometemos, son los mis errores que nos enseñan y nos hacen meas fuerte.

What I Found Out

I'm going to try to obey my parents. I'm going to avoid my friends who have just taught not good stuff. This is the first time in here and I've never been here before.

Now I know how it is to be in this place, and now I'm going to try to change and get away from the bad things I was doing.

I was in denial. I thought the things I was doing were fine, but now that I'm in here, I am regretful. Now I am trying to reflect and it's too late. I ask God to give me the chance to get out of here. When I get out, I'm asking God to make me a new person.

-Alex, San Francisco

From The Beat: Who said it was too late? Right now is when all the good starts. Sometimes we have to go through undesired situations to be able to see the reality of things. The mistakes we make are the mistakes that teach us what we are or what we are to become and make us stronger as well.



Community

I'm so tired of hearing these voices on the radio
 Saying the young people in the community need this
 And have too much time on their hands
 But when a youth asks for help
 He gets off
 When he seeks guidance
 They're too busy
 So when he gets around kids his age
 Who are going through the same thing
 They become the family he's been seeking all along
 And don't know one notice what's going on
 Until it's too late
 And a youth is hurt or killed
 They try to blame hip-hop
 But all I have to say about that is they need to stop!
 Oprah can speak at Howard
 And all that was good
 But why she ain't never talk at Ballou or Anacostia in
 Southeast?
 Please, it's all bigger than what they say
 They say they wanna help the community
 But they aren't going in the communities
 That need the most help
 Come to Barry Farms
 Come to Woodland Terrace Come to Condon Terrace
 Help us!
 We deserve it too
 If you are wondering who is writing this
 I was a lost youth
 Now I'm a found young man
 I lost my youth to a system that does not try to help you
 Just want to hide you in this institution or this one
 And you have to struggle when you come home
 To get a normal life
 So I'm gonna end this for now
 And ask you
 What can you do to help a community?

-Delonte

Don't Know

You don't know me, 'cause I don't even know me
 How can you antagonize me like you were my homie?
 How can you judge me by the way I talk, dress, walk or
 act?
 Can you actually say I'm a troublemaker for a fact?
 Do you face and see the things I do?
 Can you walk a mile in my shoes?
 Can you hit rock bottom and know it's not the end?
 Can you have nothin' and take care of a family
 While forced to sin?
 Do you wish for better days and prepare for death?
 Hopin' your seed will reap the benefits that's left?
 Concealed in a prism of hopes and dreams
 Knowin' that nothin' in this world is what it seems
 A hand to hold with step after step
 A wise word wit' breath after breath
 Who knows what's next in a world of death?
 Don't categorize me and remember the words that I left.

-LJ

We would like to welcome back our friends and partners, the Free Mind's Book Club and Writing Workshop for another insert of brilliant writing from the young men incarcerated in the Washington D.C. County Jail. These are young men as young as the age of 16 incarcerated in an adult facility, facing adult charges. Ok, lets allow these writers to tell it as they see it...

Back Against the Wall

I wish the court could come to our city and see our
 drama
 Father long gone and all we have is our Moma
 A single-family home with a couple of brothers
 Brothers are dying every day, now u tell us who love us
 I was always crazy tryin' to be a G
 Until that DOC snuck up on me
 Now I'm looking for my homies, nowhere to turn
 My Moma keep laughing, saying "a lesson learned"
 She be writing me, telling me keep my faith in God
 Because sooner than later I could be facing God
 Now my mind is twisted and I'm going through some
 things
 My baby Moma crying and feeling her pain
 I wish I could stop them before they fall
 Tier tears
 But there's nothing I can do
 Because my back against the wall

-AH



Nonbelievers

Back and forth to jail
 My life was living hell
 Probation at age fifteen
 I was still smoking weed
 They threatened to commit me
 But I was young and dumb
 Went home, caught another charge
 Oak Hill Youth Center here I come
 The system sets you up for failure
 Some youth don't know
 Went home, got off papers
 I showed the judge for sure
 Probation is what I had
 I did what I had to do
 So proud
 So glad.

-RW

This Girl

I opened up my eyes to white walls and a metal bed
 Lookin' back on all the things I once did and once said
 How could I take this girl on another turn for the worst?
 She was the only one who gave me that energy burst
 She been wit' me from the get-go, seen the things I seen
 Showed me the world through her perspective
 And why things are so mean
 She hugged people when I hugged them, cried when I
 cried
 Heard the things people told me and showed me when
 they lied
 I told her once before that this jail stuff was done
 Gave me a look into my future and showed me there was
 no fun
 She took time out to teach me, gave me street
 knowledge
 Showed me right from wrong
 So our relationship wouldn't get demolished
 She's been with millions of people
 But that doesn't make her easy for sho'
 Why am I takin' up for this girl? I'm about to let you
 know
 This girl is something special
 I just might make her my wife
 She'll be with me forever, this girl called "Life."

-TH

Urgent Notice

It's kind of sad how they label us
 Black juveniles I mean
 Quickly to crush our dreams
 And give us sentences
 Thinking we did something
 Saying we on something
 Want us to do right
 But provide us with nothing
 I'm 17, that's young
 Not close to old age
 They tell me my life over
 After reading the first page
 Jail is the last stage
 So they don't care what we do
 Want to know how I know, or how could I tell?
 Because I fit a description so I'm thrown in jail
 I been here one month
 Not once been schooled on what not to do
 It's only been one month
 What happen next can't tell
 This just a short memo
 Of a juvenile life
 Housed in the adult jail.

-JW

My Pen Gently Weeps

Years of incarceration
 Family and friends done left me for dead
 Being black, poor, and alone
 Breeds hate, rage, and frustration
 Other convicts screaming at night
 Making it hard for me to sleep
 I'm having visions of myself six feet deep
 Yet as I write this poem, my pen gently weeps
 I spit words of wisdom, raw and real
 To all my true heart folks
 As the days pass and years roll on
 People act as if it's a game
 And I'm telling them jokes
 The world shows no mercy for anyone
 Mama please forgive me for my future sins
 I am a product of my up bringing
 I strive to survive in the pen
 Alone in this hell; trapped by concrete
 I shed tears of blood as my pen gently weeps
 Lil' sis got murdered left me
 I no longer receive any letters
 Losing hope and focus asking god
 Why don't she make my predicament better?
 She don't answer my pleas
 I'm dying while still alive
 I am on the edge of an emotional cliff
 Getting ready to dive
 Now having visions of laying out on concrete
 I wont be missed in the physical form
 But by words will live on
 As I spit words of realness, and this pen gently weeps.

JOHNNIE MICHAELS

Our next writer is sending us a couple of brilliant poems from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Johnnie has been a writer for our publication for quite some time now, we first met him as a juvenile in SF/YGC, way before there was a Beat program. Whenever he drops us a few lines they are always elegant and full of wisdom. With expression deeper than the Grand Canyon Johnnie openly expresses his sadness as his pen gently weeps through the pages of The Beat Within.

Have You Ever?

Have you ever shared your soul with a stranger?
 Only to realize he was a long lost friend?
 Have you ever talked to a man, like you talk with a girlfriend?
 And share what you can't with other men?
 Can you see your love being given
 To a criminal who is stuck in this hell?
 Can you hold off from jogging him?
 Til' the day you get to know him well?
 Can you close your eyes and imagine
 If everything went right
 The power of passion is finally possessed
 After all those sleepless nights
 After all what can I offer you?
 Besides lonely nights and sweet words
 Promises of pleasures to come
 I bet you think I'm gaming you
 Just like the men in your past
 Cause they too promised you heaven on earth
 But none seem to last
 All I can say is have faith in me
 And I hope and pray with time, you'll come to see
 That the definition of love and friendship
 Can be discovered in me.

people have seemed to forget that things weren't always like this. We have it very much easier than our ancestors.

Blackmind

Beat: Welcome back, Professor. What have you been up to lately?

Professor Blackmind: I left the Sacramento County Jail and now I'm starting my 16-month bid here at DVI Reception prison in Tracy.

Beat: We heard many things about DVI, and none of them were good...

Blackmind: This place is filthy and totally congested. You get no kind of program here. We're in our cell 24 hours a day. We only go to Yard once a week. This is not much different than The Hole.

Beat: That's horrible. What do you do to burn time?

Blackmind: I've been reading a whole lot. I mostly read The Beat and James Patterson books. In The Beat Within, I look for pieces by G. Shadow ("Soldier"), Lo of Solano ("The Soldier Code"), and Espo of Alameda ("Something Deep"). But I must admit that I am a BWO fanatic and I love all of Michael Cabral's pieces as well as Artemis Cain's "The Art," Johnny Bright's "Behind The Wall," and my D.V.I brethren John Talamantes "Cold Stone." They are a very big part of my program.

Beat: What about Patterson?

Blackmind: Oh, yeah. He's my all-time favorite. Since I've been here, I've read The Midnight Club, Jack & Jill, Cat & Mouse, Mary Mary, The Quickie, The Jester, Beach Road, and Double Cross. And also Step On A Crack, which I just finished, James Patterson keeps me intrigued.

Beat: He's a great author. But now let's talk about your new piece. What inspired you to write "Black History"?

Blackmind: Well, first let me say that when I first started writing The Beat seven years ago, my pieces were less personal and more Afro-centric. I wrote poetry about the struggles and oppression of my people. It took me long periods of time to write those pieces because I had to learn our history and write what I knew.

I was 16 years old and I wanted to be an advocate for young black men. The Beat gave me the opportunity to do that by publishing my pieces. I love my early pieces because they were less about me personally, and more about my people in general. It's easy to write about yourself, but it much harder to write about those who came before you.

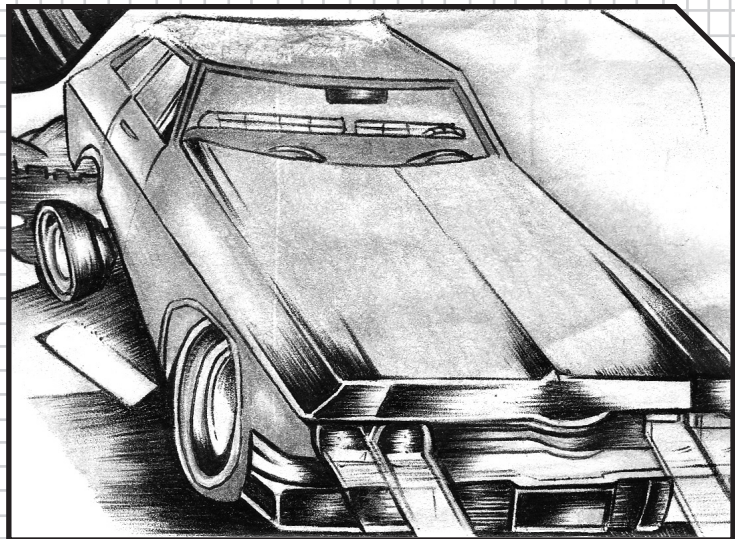
You have to get the facts straight and you have to write with passion and be sincere. "Black History" is a throwback for me. I had to get back in to the same mode I was in when I first started writing for The Beat.

Beat: What mode is that?

Blackmind: I call it "Revolutionary Mode." The sacrifices Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, and even Robert F. Kennedy made were tremendous. These people lived and died for our people and people of all age, races, and nationalities. They were genuine lovers of the human race and they fought hard to protect our rights.

I wanted to enlighten people about them and others who helped to make our lives as easy as it is today. People have seemed to forget that things weren't always like this. We have it very much easier than our ancestors. Racism has toned down tremendously. Barack Obama is proof. Please read and take "Black History" to heart.

When Professor Blackmind first graced the pages of The Beat as a 16-year-old boy, we were blown away by his literary gifts, by his great mind and even greater heart. In the seven years since, he has written for us many times, sometimes from the depths and sometimes from the heights. Now he roars back onto our pages as a 23-year-old man, with some of the most moving writing he's ever produced. His poetry speaks for itself, and any attempt to describe it can only diminish its power. The great trace of history encompassed in the poem, "Black History," we can imagine him reading on the steps of the U.S. Capitol on January 20 as Barack Obama (whom he addresses directly and beautifully in the poem, "Black President" which is featured on the cover) puts his hand on the Bible, takes the Oath, and becomes the nation's 44th President — the first black person ever to do so.



To The Beat

To anyone who reads this. I just want to thank you for allowing me to share with you. To all The Beat editors and staff, I love you guys and I hope you continue to put in hard work week after week. Honestly, I don't know how you do it. You gotta be the hardest working bunch in San Francisco.

Seriously, I've been to the Beat headquarters. It amazed me to see so many dedicated and hard working people in one office. You workaholics are very inspiring, especially, a certain Assistant Editor who I've had the honor of being friends with for several years. You know who you are.

The Beat has been very instrumental in my transition from a young juvenile poet into the more mature writer I am today. I've written well over one hundred fifty pieces and most of them have been published in The Beat BWO pages. I'm planning on putting together two chapbooks titled, "The Beat of My Black Heart" and "Felonious: Poems and Letters to The Beat" which will be collections of all the pieces I've sent to The Beat. I'll publish them through my small e-book imprint, Blacksmith Press, which will be distributed through my Myspace, Facebook, and email accounts free of charge.

But to say on subject, I just wanted to thank The Beat and its readers for allowing me to share these special Black History Month pieces with all of you. With Barack Obama as our nation's leader, I feel that we should all celebrate by putting pen to paper with pieces honoring him and our people. I wrote "Black History," "Black President," "Black Man," and "Through These Black Eyes (Part Two)" to express my enthusiasm about the future and my awareness of the past.

Thank you for reading.

Black History

I am a black man
 As far as the eyes can see
 But deep underneath this skin
 There is so much more to me
 When Dr. King had a dream
 The rest of the world was asleep
 So many brothers and sisters died
 The hatred ran skin deep
 Through sit-ins to beat downs
 So many casualties
 With segregated drinking fountains
 That came with penalties
 When Lady Parks got on that bus
 With plans to change the world
 She fought for peace and equality
 For every boy and girl
 For men and women of all races
 Protecting Civil Rights
 To change the laws of old Jim Crow
 Indeed we had to fight
 Through Dr. King we learned to love
 Through X we learned to teach
 The Panthers taught us to fight back
 And never accept defeat
 When Lady Tubman went Underground
 The Railroad set us free
 Before Old Abe signed that Proclamation
 Freedom we couldn't see
 The Greatest refused the military
 Against the white man's war
 They segregated public schools
 Something we couldn't ignore
 The CIA released the crack
 To create an epidemic
 Destroyed The Panther's Revolution
 And urban academics
 From crackheads came crack babies
 The future of the streets
 The Projects and street gangs
 Began our bloody defeat
 Hustlers, pimps, and gangsters
 The rulers of the land
 Increased convictions and murder rates
 Forgotten dreams and plans
 Rodney King and rioting
 Chaos within the streets
 Corrupted system and politicians
 Police brutality
 George Bush and Katrina
 The blacks in New Orleans
 Neglected and abandoned
 To drown in bloody steams
 First Jesse Jackson then Al Sharpton
 Potential candidates
 Barack Obama was the only black man
 The people would nominate
 We made it through the pain and strife
 To make our lasting imprint
 We celebrate our history
 With the first black President.

Black Man

Don't be so hard on yourself Black Man
 Never forget your goals and your master plan
 I know times are hard and you're feeling down
 But keep your head up and true friends around
 Don't give up hope and learn from mistakes
 Being a soldier is all it takes
 You will make it through all oppression
 Even while suffering from depression
 When times get tough don't forget to pray
 To fight these demons from day to day
 Just build your strength and learn how to survive
 Maintain your will to stay alive
 Gather your people and teach what you've been taught
 Give freely the knowledge that they have sought
 Promote peace and thrive as a unit
 Why continue to suffer when we've all been through it
 Let's love one another and give support to the youth
 Shield their eyes from propaganda and expose the truth
 Listen quicker than you speak
 And practice what you preach
 Love and respect every woman and child
 Even when they're lost and running wild
 Protect them from poison of the body and mind
 Teach them to leave the gangs and drugs behind
 Never forget your roots no matter how much you grow
 Be cautious of your actions because you reap what you sow
 Humble yourself and do what feels right
 And never give in without a fight
 Black Man.

Through These Black Eyes (Part Two)

Look into my eyes
 These black eyes
 You can see the pain and struggle
 Of my ancestors
 My vision is marred by poverty
 Drugs and violence
 Gangs and prison life
 Long forgotten
 Is the strife our people went through
 To get us where we are today
 Drinking below the "colored" sign
 Fighting for equality
 To be recognized as human beings
 And to not be degraded by those
 Who hate because the color of our skin
 Beautifully darkened by the rays
 Of the joyful sun
 From Africa came our great ancestors
 Who were tribal Kings and Queens
 They were raped, beaten, and kidnapped
 And shipped to this country as slaves
 Those who didn't make it
 Were thrown into the wicked seas
 As if discarding waste
 Those who did make it
 Had it much worse
 They raped our women
 Burned down our churches
 Whipped our men
 Leaving deep gashes
 From many lashes
 Changed our names
 But addressed us all
 By calling us that horrible word
 This is the pain
 Seen in these black eyes
 It comes from my ancestors
 And the terrible things they went through

Message to Our Youth

Much solidarity and blessing to our youth, as I sit behind the wire and ponder many thoughts of today's youth. I have come to reality many aspects of the great many problems that our youth face and why we must adjust our attitude and help the youth to understand the real truth. We must make every attempt possible to get the youth to understand and to face the perpetually we all have sustained because without this, we as a people, will surrender our birthright as a people.

Dear people this country is a pit of pure hate and we must force our oppressors to see the fruit of their oppression action toward all people, plus those of us behind these razor wire must let our family and friends who visit us know that they should not weep or be frightened. Rather they should be happy, proud that we behind the razor wire care about the next generation of youth and their imminent destruction. See our anger and humiliation is real, and if we do not do anything about this problem, we will allow our youth of today to be hurled into the spiritless obscurity of life or death. The vast majority of mankind do not understand that the most urgent problem is not war or taxation, but hunger of our youth.

Take a moment and ponder this fact, over 1,500,000,000 people, something like two thirds of the world population, mainly our youth are living in condition of acute hunger. This my dear young people is a fact and it can be defined in terms of identifiable nutritional disease. This hunger is at the same time, the effect and the cause of, the poverty, crime, squalor, misery and lack of education in which they live.

Please note this short poem I wish to share at this point in my essay:

Forget Not

Each achievement of each human is the achievement of all

If you have accomplished something, it is due to the help of others

We all eat the fruit, but we must honor those who planted the tree

When you return from life's battle in victory

And, thanks to our comrades

We all have succeeded

Now in success forget not our fallen comrades

Forget not, because without them

There would never have been a tree in the first place

Forget not, forget not!

See, dear youth, the actual truth is that the ruling class should be the ones incarcerated for the truth is that capitalism of our youth is a crime, a heinous crime against humanity, the earth and ultimately a crime against God. So with this truth in mind, our youth should not be naive enough to believe for a second that the government is in any way actually concerned with hunger or putting an end to crime. Such a thing would be insane at the very least to ponder.

At this time with the conclusion of my message, I must point out, I am not a racist nor do I in any way subscribe to the tents of racism. I can state in all sincerity that I wish nothing but freedom, justice, life, equality, liberty and the pursuit of dignity for all our youth.

This is my message to the youth and I ask that you support my cause to inspire, encourage, and to educate our youth to the truth and not get trapped behind the razor wire plantation. So dare to struggle, dare to win, knowledge is power.

Our next writer has been a contributor for our publication for quite some time now. He never fails to come through with some thoughtful, and heavily detailed pieces. He always expresses concern for the future of the younger generations before him and tries to educate everyone with the knowledge he already knows. Knowledge is power folks, as we all know. With knowledge you can tear apart the highest, and rockiest mountains of ignorance. Sending us a message behind the razor wire of a State Prison in Vacaville, CA. Anthony gives us a piece of his intelligent mind!

Friendship That Lasts a Lifetime

Friendship that lasts a lifetime is one that will give and take
 It's built on truth and honesty and offers a firm handshake
 A friend will stand beside you when others turn away
 If distance separates for a season in your heart they'll forever stay
 When burdens are heavy to carry, a friend will stretch out a hand
 Obstacles that you couldn't overcome, with a friend's help you often can

Friendship that lasts a lifetime can keep secrets that were told
 For it's about loyalty and kindness that shines forth as pure as gold
 Friendship that lasts a lifetime is built on love and trust and care
 It's a bridge that's easy to cross over; it's made for both to share
 Friendship that lasts a lifetime!

The System

Greetings, this essay is on the cold hard truth about the system, as I see it from behind the razor wire. I live it everyday and I will try to point out how the system has always oppressed the so-call low class people. See my people today one of the most common and underhanded forms of racism is for society to admit that people they consider low class are far worse off than the so-call upper class, and to blame people of color themselves for this situation.

What this amounts to people, is the dirty trick of saying that in the past and still to this day, people of color were and are subjected to oppression and discrimination, and that they are to blame for their depressed conditions always. This is a lie camouflage that covers for the whole economic and political system in the United States and those who run it, but who are in fact the ones to blame for this country condition. Don't be fooled, the so-call founding fathers of this country defended the condition of oppression and upheld the interest of their action against the people of color "as right."

Did you know that sitting behind this razor wire, I have learned that this government looks and treats people of color as only being three-fifths of a human being. A dog or cat has more rights than a person of color. In short one cannot help but see and must accept as fact that all people of color, the true native of this country, are and continue to be treated as something less than human, as though we are beasts or savages who never had reached and never could reach the high level of civilization of this country. My people, the fact that both in the third world and in America, people of color are highly developed societies and cultures, long before America came to dominate these places. See this basic truth has been and continues to be denied and written out of history by the American conquerors and enslavers. See we must fully understand that this system we live under is based on complete exploitation of people. Here within the United States and all over the world nothing worthwhile will come about until this system is overthrown and this can only be done by us educating our youth. Allow me to give you a quick example of this system before I close this out.

James Byrd, a Black man, had a rope tied around his neck and was dragged behind a truck by racists until his head came off. This happened in 1998 in Jasper, TX, not in 1698. So in closing my dear youth, the lynching of people continues to this day and is not opposed by this system.

That in regards says a lot I would think. This is the very reason we need to make this a mission of and for the youth, and of and for the masses, to continually develop and strengthen our ability to identify and handle our relationship within the system. See the greatest evil in mankind is the oppression of human being by human being. So in closing my people, dare to struggle, dare to win, knowledge is all powerful and our only hope.

My Life

If my life could be chained I would be a good father
I would love my daughter
I would be a good son
I would be a good nephew...
In my life I was raised with love and hope
I had the strength as strong as some rope
I had always been a momma's boy
I am not gonna lie
If I could change the world I would have you all by my side
No matter your past, sex or color
This is a peace of my heart and soul
Written to the people
Dedicated to The Beat Within!

The Beat Within

It has been many years since I have graced the powerful pages of the "Beat Within". I was once a young individual that wrote poetry, short entries, and also life stories. Some of you may know me as "Baby Boy." some of you may have heard of me or read my pieces. Some of you may not remember me at all. But that does not change the fact that writing to a magazine for youth and adult offenders (like my self) and actually feel free to write about our feelings without the discrimination from others.

When I started writing to The Beat I was 12 years old in NAPA County Juvenile Hall. Since then I have been through C.Y.A., county jail and now currently in San Quentin State Prison. I am now 22 years old with a beautiful daughter named Rylee and another chance at freedom coming up soon. My daughter is 8 months old and growing.

To me life is a wonderful feeling when you can create another life with a person you have once loved and cared about. As I sit here looking at my family's pictures and the pictures of my beautiful little girl, I get the courage and the strength to reach out to other individuals that are in the same shoes as myself. I wish that I could have changed and when down the right path.

To be square is the new life to live. For my self it is a struggle to live the life. I now proceed as an ex-con and

Our next writer has pretty much written down his own introduction and also, some inspirational words. Baby Boy has been through it all from Napa Juvenile Hall (Where The Beat once ran weekly workshops), to CYA, to County Jail, and now sits in San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. We welcome back Baby Boy, who drops a few lines of encouragement. He reaches out to you young people with hopes that you don't have to go through everything that he has went through. Baby boy is lucky that he is still young while he discovered that he was wasting his time. He now is looking forward to a released date to go home and spend some time with his family and his recently born daughter.

convicted felon. Now that I have a child to raise, behind these prison walls it is almost unbearable to think straight and focus on the main goal, which is to succeed in life and success is the goal to set in life.

I am now close to freedom once again in the year 2009. It is gonna be a goal in life that I have to face. Now I have parole, my family, myself and my life, that I have to change; in order not to fail. I hope and pray that you young women and men can change your lives before it's too late, and make something positive out of yourselves. We, as men and women in these systems (juvenile hall, CYA jail, prison, camps etc.), are stereo typed and labeled by the community we once helped and done something positive for.

Now they are frightened and angered by the knowledge of us still living amongst their communities as felons, convicts, "thugs," and the other names we are called because of our past mistakes as human beings. There is no perfection, only betterness and forgiveness of our actions. If you are close or already 18 please do me and every one else a favor. Please change and make something positive out of your lives. Make our communities better for our families' and friends. Share the love and hope to people like us that the system is all we know or have.

Love your families and friends. Bring peace to yourself and others and keep in mind that we are all equal no matter what race, sex, and religion we are. I thank you Beat for givin' me hope and strength to stay positive even though I am locked down.

And to every one that has read this and or has givin' my piece a thought I love you all.

Lastly, if you can send some Beats my way, I will gladly appreciate it, with love and respect.

SLYDE

How Do You Want To Be Judged?

There are a lot of things that we all take for granted. We do not realize the things that we have until we no longer have them. Mortality (meaning your life), health (meaning your well-being), are just a couple of things that come to mind.

Do you ever stop to wonder just how fragile life is? There are so many situations that could alter your life or change it forever. How many different ways are there to kill or be killed? You could be a victim as easy as anybody else. Don't be another statistic. Don't take life for granted.

What would happen if you were supposed to go home, but you were just released? There is a difference. What would you do if, upon your release, you were standing at a bus stop with nowhere to go? No one to turn to? What would you do? I don't even know how I would respond. I do go home. There are some people who get out of these places with \$200 in their pocket and nowhere to go they

Introduced to The Beat by a neighbor incarcerated with him at Santa Rita County Jail, he's now moved on to prison, at the Duel Vocational Institution where he writes this cautionary reminder that bad actions follow bad attitudes. And that's the consequences of those bad actions can lead to a world of regret.

probably take their prison issued toothbrush with them.

Do you ever put yourself in someone else's shoes? Do you ever look at yourself and your actions, and try to perceive yourself as others do? Everyone judges people. That is just simple truth. How would you like to be judged?

My whole picture is the one I've painted for myself. I'm the one who has to live it. People can tell you one thing, but we seem to believe that we have to try it or find out for ourselves. I know I believe none of what I heart and half of what I see. I doubt even the things I witness, until I try them for myself.

I see a lot of negativity in these pages. Get your mind out of the gutter before your body follows you.

A Gun In The Wrong Hands

On the battlegrounds of the United States, guns are a problem. People live their lives on the edge, in fear of one day becoming a target of a crazed gunman. But, that's not the biggest fear.

What's more scary than anything is a gun in the hands of someone who either doesn't understand accountability, or is too immature to care.

When a teenager, especially one under the age of 15, is walking around with a gun, you can bet he or she is waiting for the opportunity to use it. It can be something minor or something that has nothing to do with them directly. All they need is an excuse.

These teenage gunmen don't negotiate. They don't talk much, and they aren't interested in you begging for your life. Their lives mean nothing to them, so your life means even less. They are too immature to begin to grasp the affect of their acts on others. They only remember they are children when they are caught and face spending the rest of their lives in prison. Sometimes, the hardened teenage gunmen, never get a revelation.

Where do they get the guns? How can they walk around with guns and their parents not know it? Are the older adults so afraid of them, they don't report them to their parents?

All of the above questions may answer some things, but the fact is, they have gun and will shoot you at the drop of a hat and feel absolutely no remorse. Where do these kids come from? How do they develop the demeanor to kill with such ease and without fear of being punished?

Although more attention is being given to young people with guns these days, it's nothing new. They were packing during my era, but they weren't so quick to shoot. They mostly used guns to instill fear or intimidate. Not anymore.

Now, these outlaws walk around with an itch they can't scratch, and look for a situation where they can pull out their gun and fire it at someone. It doesn't matter who they are shooting at. All they want to do is release the anger, frustration, and confusion they feel.

The only way to stop this is for parents to take charge, if they want to. The only way to stop this is for parents to take charge. If they want to either keep their children alive or out of prisons, they will have to step up and take over.

No longer can they be more concerned with themselves and neglect their children. If this trend continues, sooner or later the parents that turn their heads and ignore this problem may someday find themselves victims or another family member. **THINK ABOUT IT!**

GUIDANCE

Jesus was a teacher, a leader, a motivator, and a loving friend to those around Him. He was also a seeker on a journey of discovery. Following the guidance of God, Jesus found and shared examples in everyday life that revealed the relationship of God to nature and to all humanity.

As I turn within for inspiration and guidance, I, too, am on a journey of discovery. At times the path may be well defined, and at other times it may seem obscure. However, God is my guide at all times, showing me the way to understand and express my own divine nature. The Christ Spirit within guides me on a journey of discovery.

Starting 2009 with a bang, Shawn Montgomery doesn't hesitate to drop some words of wisdom and knowledge. Coming through with a few pieces to read, Shawn touches topics from unemployment, to teens with guns. Writing to us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, Shawn graces us with his thoughts on life once again!

If You Can't Find a Job...

The economy has taken a downward spiral and companies are folding by the day. Some people who were once part of a thriving economy find themselves in the unemployed line through no fault of their own. This pool of individuals that seems to grow more each day also have some free time on their own hands. Instead of being sad about their situation, more and more people are preparing themselves for when the job market improves by enrolling in school.

Some are taking college courses while others have enrolled themselves in vocational schools. Either way, it is a very intelligent move on their part. This idea serves a dual purpose of keeping oneself busy while preparing for when the job market improves. Enrolling in school allows the person to make a career change if he or she feels the need.

I'm sure some would like to enroll in school, but feel that because they are unemployed they cannot afford it. That may not be necessarily true. Those who are interested should call or visit the institution they would like to attend and inquire about financial aid. Every year, thousands of dollars in financial aid goes untapped simply because people either don't apply for it or they don't know that it is available. Both colleges and vocational schools have financial aid counselors available. However, you don't have to rely solely on them to see what you may qualify to receive.

You can visit web sites to search for and apply for the different types of financial aid available. For example, if you have the desire to become a chief, there is money available in that field. But if you don't look for it, you won't know to ask about it.

Many institutions realize that single parents need childcare and offer it on campus.

Additionally, if a single parent has a Section 8 voucher and wishes to continue his or her education in another city, he or she doesn't have to worry about living expenses. He or she would only need to locate to a place in that city that will accept his or her voucher.

So if you are tired of trying to find a job, workforce can help you get enrolled in school and you don't have to be fresh out of high school or have a sparkling clean background to expand your mind.

I Told You So

In the year 2008, no one should be surprised to know that predominantly Hispanic and high-poverty rated schools have the fewest number of top-quality teachers. For decades, studies and data have shown that these schools usually receive the most inexperienced and least qualified teachers.

In fact, such studies have driven the NAACP, the National Urban League (NUL) and many other organizations to support busing. Teachers with national board certification are considered the "cream-of-the-crop" or the "best" teachers. Thus, they gravitate to the "better" of schools. Unfortunately, students who would benefit most from being taught by the board certified teachers are most often relegated to predominantly minority and poor schools.

Available data has shown that segregated schools lack quality teachers. Furthermore, I envision, a new round of lawsuits will pursue equity in the staffing of public schools. Clearly, Black children's poor performance in racially and economically segregated schools cannot remain unchallenged.

Therefore, I support tying additional salary insensitive to board certified teachers who choose to teach at schools with high minority and high poverty rates, Call it "combat pay".

Hello From Miami Detention

What comes to mind when you think of Miami...Beaches? Palm trees? Celebrities? There is so much more to this city than what you might see at first glimpse. In fact, it is a city where many cultures come together and where young people are bright, sophisticated individuals.

We are proud of our heritages and cultures here in Juvenile Detention. We are proud to have a voice to add to The Beat Within. And most of all, we are honored to have the chance to express ourselves. It is by doing so that we can shape our experiences and regain some control over our destinies. For many of us in Miami, Detention is but one chapter in a book that has yet to be written; although it is part of us, it will not define us. You should know that The Beat Within is widely read and enjoyed here. Now we want to give back. We hope you will enjoy reading what we have to offer, and expect more to come as this project takes off.

It's been great to have this latest exchange with Eddy Ameen, MA, a Mental Health Intern, who has been working very hard in getting The Beat Within implemented in the juvenile justice center in Miami, Florida. As of this week, he is 99 percent sure they have the go-ahead to do a Beat workshop every Friday afternoon with the young people from across the detention center. You bet we sent him the how-tos and all, and that we are a phone call/email away to support the effort. We so look forward to hearing how this all unfolds, and if it's positive, why not take a trip to sunny Florida! The great thing is that Eddy's supervisor - the regional mental health coordinator - is really excited, too and as he pilots the initial workshops, she may help it expand to others in south Florida. One workshop at a time! This week we welcome the young writer, James!

Detention is but one chapter in a book that has yet to be written; although it is part of us, it will not define us.

Something Special

Everyone has something special
 That they keep and never let go
 Something that they had
 And didn't even know
 Something that is on their mind
 Twenty-four seven
 Something so special
 It has to be sent from heaven
 Something that touches their heart
 Every time it is on their mind
 Something so special
 One of a kind
 I too have something special
 That I keep too
 That something special
 Is the love I have for you

-James

What Makes You Cool

What makes you cool?
 Is it the places you've been?
 Is it the crime you've committed
 Or the gang you're in?
 Is it your grades in school
 Or your job at work?
 Does it make it cool
 If you are a bully or jerk?
 Or is it the people you dated
 Or the sex you have had?
 Is it the drugs you've sold
 'Cause if it is that's sad.
 If that's what you think
 You are a fool.
 Because if that's what it takes,
 You shouldn't want to be cool

-James

Dear Beat

Hello again to all out there in The Beat community. I'm moving along just like I should be. Focused and willing the world seems so crazy right now, globally economically, and all sorts of madness. There is so much going on and, quite frankly, it seems fit for the surroundings.

I read the newspaper and just am amazed at how much scramble is in the forefront of it all. Yet, I have found an ultimate tool of salvation that is, everyday, becoming more and more my "equalizer" in the scheme of things. They say that the "pen is mightier than the sword," and I strongly agree to this, and further, attest to it being my balance and strong hold. I, with tool in hand, can release, express, correspond and basically mill out anything, no matter what comes my way.

I write songs, poems, essays, stories you name it. And I'm taking the subject at hand. There is no reason why someone, anyone, "self silence" there voice, no matter what. The youngsters I read into within The Beat are faced with enormous trials and tribulations, and personally, I do believe that these youths are given some sort of liberation, just by giving the opportunity to be heard.

I got mad love, and give mad props to all the little homies and home girls that put their thoughts out there. Keep it up. All of you kids keep putting your voice out there. Believe me, your all being heard. That's from the heart. Stay smart, stay strong, and be safe. All of y'all in The Beat: keep truckin'!

SORROW

Our next writer has been dropping in and out of the pages of our publication for quite some time now. He doesn't ever bite his tongue, or let's say more like his hand, as he continues to pen down some inspiring words for you readers out there. Dropping a few lines filled with respect and some good intentions, Sorrow aims to send a message with some advice. Even though he's trapped behind the walls of a Correctional Facility in Lancaster, CA, his words spill beyond the walls as he breaks barriers with some powerful words of advice and inspiration.

Dedicated To You

Within,...
 I'm how I want
 It is so that I am free
 Whatever doors you close?
 I'm happy just with me
 Believe that there are times
 That push upon my space
 My smile will always shine
 I'm never far from grace
 This place isn't meant to hurt
 This place is meant to win

I laugh because I can
 Not a scratch upon my skin
 Theses walls are paper-thin
 I've chosen them this way
 I joke the night away
 Tomorrow, come my way
 Today my heart is strong
 The beat is full and true
 To those that need some hope
 I write these words for you

To be square is the new life to live. For my self it is a struggle to live the life. I now proceed as an ex-con and convicted felon. Now that I have a child to raise, behind these prison walls it is almost unbearable to think straight and focus on the main goal, which is to succeed in life and success is the goal to set in life.

read the rest of Baby Boy's BWO piece on page 57

